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EXPERIENCE and the CHRISTIAN FAITH

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EXPERIENCE AND THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

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To

My Father and Mother

PREFACE

Some years ago I was asked to teach a course in a divinity school on "Christian social philosophy." I was requested to trace the influence of secular philosophy on the social ideals and practices of the Christian Church in the various periods of its history. This proved to be a fascinating historical study, but it left me with a feeling of dissatisfaction.

It was too easy to look upon Christianity as a mirror reflecting the structure and development of culture, and as having within itself no distinctive character. As historian, one may find it rewarding to analyze the influence of Stoic philosophy on early Christianity, or the relation of Aristotle to the medieval Church. But as a Christian living in the modern world, one is not content to think of his religion as a formless movement buffeted about by the changing winds of secular ideologies. He acts as a member of the Christian community in the faith that Christianity may be a positive cultural force.

But how can we find a distinctively Christian social philosophy? What are the essentials of the Christian faith as applied to social questions? It is this query which prompted the writing of the present book and to which it attempts to give an answer.

One of the more important trends in current religious thought is a renewed interest in Christian tra-

dition and a new emphasis on revelation. Many of us, while impressed by this trend, are unable and unwilling to give up the experimental or pragmatic way of thinking. Between the new traditionalism and the experimental method there appears to be a genuine conflict. I believe, however, that there are values in both and I have tried to outline a theological method which combines them in a consistent fashion. In the final chapter this method is used as a basis for pointing the way to a Christian social philosophy.

During the preparation of this work I have been made aware of my debt to many thinkers. It is impossible to list them all, but I should like to express my appreciation of Professor D. C. Macintosh, who introduced me to the study of theology fifteen years ago, and whose continued friendship I prize. I am aware also of how much I owe my colleagues in the Colgate department of philosophy and religion. I am indebted especially to Professor E. T. Adams for his kindness in allowing me to use some material from an unpublished work of his, also to numerous authors and publishers named in the text and in footnotes for permission to quote copyright material from their respective published works.

My wife and Miss Susan Borden read the various versions of the manuscript and made many helpful suggestions. My wife has tried valiantly to make me relate the technical problems of theologians to the practical concerns of men and women. I hope that her effort has not been entirely without success.

HOWARD B. JEFFERSON.

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CHAPTER ONE

EXPERIMENTALISM VERSUS TRADITION

I

Santayana once characterized America as a young country with an old mentality. The conflict between youth and age, the new and the old, experimentalism and tradition, is a perennial one, but it attained a peculiar acuteness in American life. The practical and urgent problems of subduing a continent transformed quickly peoples of old European stock into an emerging American people. On the other hand, these people brought with them a way of viewing the world which continued in what Santayana calls "the genteel tradition." This tradition was nourished, in the first place, by the Calvinistic philosophy and, in the second place, by Emersonian transcendentalism. It did not spring from the actual life and experience of America in action, but was kept alive only by the hereditary spirit. As the young America grew out of infancy toward maturity it was inevitable that a conscious outlook more nearly in accord with the actual practice of the nation should begin to take form. In the face of this development the dualism of the American mind and will, theory and practice, was sharpened. It remained only

for someone to make articulate the view of the world which the experience of young America presupposed in order to dispose of that genteel tradition which had long since lost all vital contact with the day by day experience of men and women.

Writing in 1911, Santayana felt that this had been done by William James, whose "way of thinking and feeling represented the true America, and represented in a measure the whole ultramodern, radical world." [1] James's hospitable mind gave a respectful hearing to strange and unconventional ideas regardless of their origin. It thought of the world as an "ongoing process" rather than as a rigid system about which the final word had been said. He brought theory and practice together by pointing out that intelligence is an important and useful tool which has emerged in the evolutionary process to help men in their attempt to get along successfully in their environment. Ideas are true not because of their correspondence to a fixed reality or to a revered tradition; they are true if, when acted upon, they issue in satisfactory consequences. This philosophy of experimentalism, developed more fully and consistently by John Dewey, has become an important movement in modern life.

Such a point of view is, in many ways, hostile to tradition. Since ideas are plans of action it follows that reverence for a tradition is dangerous. Although ideas may have issued from practical problems faced by people in the past and may have been useful then, they

[1] "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy," in *Winds of Doctrine,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1913, p. 204.

soon become obsolete. Tradition, however, tends to crystallize these ideas into religious creeds and philosophical systems which then become the criteria of truth. A reverence for tradition causes us to employ our intellects and moral enthusiasm in the task of perpetuating theories and ideals which may be not only irrelevant to the modern world, but positively harmful. Thus our energies are diverted from the important intellectual task of framing hypotheses and testing them by consequences, and from the ethical task of formulating relevant ideals and devoting ourselves to realizing them.

Two areas in which this philosophy has been applied significantly are education and religion. Experimental education is opposed to the assumption that there are antecedent realities which the intellect is trained to understand. It assumes, rather, that man is an organism acting in and being acted upon by his environment. Knowledge becomes important in this process as an instrument for solving problems which experience presents, for making secure those things which one values, and for avoiding those things which one considers harmful. Knowing is one phase of experience, and is always linked with activity. Thus the school should not be concerned merely with training the intellect, or with imparting second-hand knowledge. It should, on the contrary, produce an environment in which the student will have a wide and varied experience. In such an environment the student will be forced to learn something of himself and the world in which he

lives; he will find ends to pursue and problems to solve. He will learn by doing.

In religion the philosophy of experimentalism leads to pragmatic humanism. Here, too, it is the future reference which is important rather than the sanctity of a tradition. Religion is primarily devotion to ideal ends which it is hoped may be brought into being. Dewey describes genuine religious faith as "the unification of the self through allegiance to inclusive ideal ends, which imagination presents to us and to which the human will responds as worthy of controlling our desires and choices." But concerning loyalty to tradition he says: "It is probably impossible to imagine the amount of intellectual energy that has been diverted from the normal processes of arriving at intellectual conclusions because it has gone into rationalization of the doctrines entertained by historic religion." [2]

II

I have mentioned education as well as religion in this connection because there is an interesting parallel in their development. In both cases it has seemed that for several years the chief task of experimentalism was that of converting the very conservative and the partially modernized forces to its way of thinking. Its opposition appeared to be little more than the dead weight of custom which was being gradually lessened as more and more reactionaries were led out of darkness into the light of a new day.

But recently a new and dynamic opposition has

[2] *A Common Faith,* Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1934, p. 33.

reared its head. President Hutchins' criticism of experimentalism in education cannot be dismissed as obscurantism, since it is based on the analysis of the actual performance of progressive education. Furthermore, his proposals for reform include taking seriously the best ideas which have been produced in the past and which make up our intellectual heritage. "The genteel tradition" may have vanished, but a new opposition of tradition and experimentalism is in our midst; and knowledge of the tradition is looked upon not only as relevant to our modern problems, but as an indispensable means for solving them.

A similar thing has happened in religion. The title of Charles Hartshorne's book *Beyond Humanism* is suggestive of this, although it is not his "naturalistic theism" to which I wish to call attention. The word "beyond" rather than "against" as applied to humanism suggests that criticism today is coming not merely from those who refuse to take the final step, but from those who have found that the step is not final and who are now passing beyond, even though to some it may look as though they are going back. There is an influential type of religious thought which is frequently labeled "the new supernaturalism," and which, we are told, is not "a flight from reason or from scientific thought, a hint of old worlds resurrected in a dream, and lived in dreamily. But here the criticized turns critic, for the 'new' supernaturalism is no mere recrudescence of prescientific lore." [3] The ecumenical

[3] E. E. Aubrey, *Present Theological Tendencies,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1936, p. 195.

movement in which American and European theologians are intimately associated is bringing to the former a new "sense of the significance of history for religion." [4] Dr. C. C. Morrison looks with approval on the fact that "the new awareness of history and its importance for Christianity is the distinctive and radical characteristic of modern theology." He goes on to say that this characteristic "seems to many observers like a retreat to the field of biblical traditionalism with its rationalistic cosmology, the field which empirical liberalism had abandoned. It is indeed, in an important sense, a return to something that had been given up. For it is a return to objectivity, that is, to a world of reality which stands against the subjectivity of psychological experience." [5] The opposition of traditionalism to experimentalism is reflected in many of the contributions of American theologians to books in the Oxford Conference series. This is seen especially clearly in Professor R. L. Calhoun's essay, where he explicitly sets forth what he believes to be the dilemmas of the philosophy of experimentalism as this is applied to theology, and then defends the "Christian faith" in opposition to it. He finds that although "much in what is affirmed by pragmatism, and by the unreflective modernism to which it gives one sort of voice, can be affirmed also by a contemporary Christian, sometimes in frank divergence from views often maintained hitherto in the name of Christianity," it is neverthe-

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[4] W. A. Brown, "What America May Contribute to the Making of an Ecumenical Theology," in *The Journal of Religion,* XVIII, 385.

[5] "The Field of Modern Theology," in *Christendom,* IV, 37.

less true that "at certain points the affirmations of Christian faith contradict both assertions and denials of naturalistic and humanistic modernism." [6]

III

The conservative swing has carried with it some who had already been humanists.[7] One reason for this change of outlook is the recognition of the fact that the vitality of humanism depends upon an optimism concerning man's ability and goodness, an optimism which many sensitive individuals today find that they have lost. An honest appraisal of the human situation reveals the extremely profound shortcomings of men and society. To the irreligious this means nothing but despair, while others have rediscovered the relevance of the traditional Christian view of man. In this doctrine they find, among other things, an awareness of the inevitable mistakes and failures of men, both individual and social, and the perpetual lack of harmony within the soul and society. These will be present to a greater or less degree in any actual situation. Recognition of this fact often leads the irreligious to a

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[6] "The Dilemma of Humanitarian Modernism," in *The Christian Understanding of Man,* Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1938, p. 68.

[7] Cf. E. E. Aubrey, *Living the Christian Faith,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1939. Professor Aubrey has not yet stated his position. However, in the preface of this book he tells us that in the process of the World War he "lost patience with sentimental mouthings, then found in humanism a more hopeful program for religious reconstruction, only to find that its effervescent enthusiasm bubbled from the surface rather than from the depths, and thus was led to try to find what those depths were." Without stating explicitly what he found beyond humanism he tells us that "if one could speak of a dialectical mysticism, perhaps that would describe my point of view."

cynical view of the worth of man and to a despair concerning his destiny. Christianity claims to have the resources which make possible a transcendent and imaginative harmony which sets an ideal from which any historic social order can be judged. The Christian view of man is able to remain free both from a false optimism and from a philosophy of futility. It avoids the former by a frank recognition of the inevitable shortcomings of any conceivable natural order. The realm of nature is at best the basis for the divine realm and can never be wholly identified with the Kingdom of God. The Christian view avoids cynicism and despair by insisting that the transcendent worth of man is not wiped out by his mistakes and pursuit of false goals. Christianity declares, "It is only that paradox of divine idealism regarding man's potentiality, and rigid realism concerning his actuality, that can ever meet the human fact." [8]

It is reflection of this sort which is bringing about the reassertion of the relevance and worth of the Christian tradition. Humanism appears to give an unsatisfactory account of some of the most significant phases of the religious consciousness. The truth is only partially spoken when we define religion as devotion to our highest values. More fundamental than this is obedience to the will of God, which is conceived as always standing in judgment upon what we count as highest in our scale of values. Ideal ends, to the deeply religious man, do not become divine because he pursues

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[8] W. G. Peck, *The Social Implications of the Oxford Movement*. Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933, pp. 113-114.

them; he pursues them because they are thought to be part of the divine plan. In the experimentalism of scientific procedure it is becoming more and more apparent that "physical concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world." [9] The virtue here is tentativeness rather than absolute devotion to this or that ideal. Religion is quite correctly analyzed as doing much harm by failing to be humble in this same sense of tentativeness. By absolutizing certain specific things in the name of God's will it has frequently impeded intelligent reform. And yet there is a dilemma here. Being tentative about our ideals makes it easier for us to substitute new ones for the old, but if religion has any positive value it is due to the fact that it calls its adherents to an absolute commitment. Political, social, scientific loyalties are relative; but religion's loyalty is to a God in virtue of whose supreme value all other things acquire whatever meaning and value they happen to possess. Only by complete commitment, and not by tentativeness, can one experience the validity of that eternal paradox of the moral life, losing one's life in order to save it. If this is an essential ingredient of religion, then it is evident that experimentalism cannot give a satisfactory account of religious experience.

Humanistic theology becomes in the last analysis something having no necessary connection with Christianity. The "religious" is present whenever the re-

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[9] Einstein and Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics,* Simon & Schuster, New York, 1938, p. 33.

sponse to ideals is such that man's desires and choices are controlled by them, and when he feels that they are worthy of sacrificial devotion. These ideals may have no organic connection with a historic faith, and it may be that the particular Christian tradition plays no part in determining which ideals should be considered as having supreme value. Experimentalism is, of course, consciously hostile toward absolutizing values of the past, and thus, from the point of view of traditional Christianity, passes over into secularism. Whether this is a good thing or a bad thing, it is certainly the case that the significance of the Christian religion is lost in humanism. Naturally those who, for one reason or another, feel that their religious life is nourished by a historic faith will rebel against humanism on this score. And it does appear to be true that in fact religion "remains stubbornly individual. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism not only claim individuality for themselves as historical events but demand that the individuality of their gods be recognized. For these religions, with the possible exception of Buddhism, are directed toward the particular God who revealed himself in an individual event or in particular events." [10] Such particularism may, and frequently does, breed intolerance and obscurantism. On the other hand, there is the question whether the dynamic of the religious life can be maintained apart from the source of its being in a particular religious heritage. There is the genuine possibility that those are right who insist that our

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[10] H. R. Niebuhr, "Value-Theory and Theology," in *The Nature of Religious Experience,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1937, pp. 104-105.

Western faith in man and our humanitarianism rest upon a Christian foundation, and that severed from that foundation they fall to pieces. It may be that it is still "in part Christian impulses gone astray which in fact, existentially, move the hearts of men and rouse them in action." [11] If this is the case, then "the time is ripe for Christians to bring things back to the fount of truth, reintegrating in the plenitude of their first origins those desires for justice, and the nostalgia for communion (now so misdirected) in which the world finds comfort for its sorrow; thus raising a cultural and temporal force of Christian inspiration able to act in history and come to the aid of men." [12]

IV

We have stated briefly the nature of the issue between experimentalism and tradition, and have suggested some of the reasons why contemporary theology is making increasing use of the Christian tradition. So long as we were confident that developments in the modern world more or less justified our faith in the idea of progress, we felt that religion should make adjustments to such developments, and this became the chief task of theology. But we find an acrid criticism of modern culture springing today from many sources, and religion is more and more reflecting this attitude. Spengler, perhaps as well as anyone, has dramatized the crisis which many people sense. One

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[11] J. Maritain, *True Humanism,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933, p. xiv.

[12] *Ibid.*

does not need to agree with Spengler's vast metaphysical scheme, or with the details of his laws of growth and decay of cultures, in order to feel with him that the death of Western civilization may be imminent. It is not uncommon to read of the coming of another "dark age," while the resurgence of primitivism and barbarism is already recognizable. And so it is the world, rather than Christianity, which needs to be saved; the world must adjust itself to Christian principles, rather than Christian ideas to the modern world. Theology, then, finds its present task to be the enunciation of Christianity's means of salvation as against the self-destructive forces and the false ideologies of our day.

The conception of its task in these terms seems to involve at least two things. In the first place, it involves a more radical criticism of the basis of modern culture than could have been offered when the idea of progress had a firmer hold upon the minds of men than it has today. Secondly, it leads to an estimate of modernist theologies which shows them to have the same self-defeating basic assumptions which have poisoned modern culture. Modernism is, therefore, not essential Christianity. To find true Christianity it seems that we must go back to a point before that period in history when Western civilization began to "go astray." The most articulate and influential anti-modernist theological movements are Neo-Thomism and the dialectical theology. The former finds its basic principles in the work of Thomas Aquinas, the latter in the Reformers. In both cases the point of departure

antedates the enlightenment. While modernism looks upon the enlightenment as the beginning of a valuable emancipation from the bonds of authority, tradition, and obscurantism, a renewed Christian conservatism sees this age as the beginning of a basically dangerous naturalism and anthropocentric humanism.

Without summarizing in detail the positions advanced by the various members of these two schools,[13] let us see what a typical critical argument would be. Among the specific objects of attack are the method of analysis, the metaphysics of atomism, and the self-sufficiency of naturalism. The method of analysis proceeds on the assumption that our understanding of anything results from breaking the whole with which we start into its component parts until we arrive at the ultimately indivisible constituent elements. This method is the counterpart of atomistic metaphysics which states that the real consists of the microscopic particles of which the world is composed. In the philosophy of the physical world these ultimates may be atoms of matter, quanta of energy, or electrons and protons. We do not know much about the "private life" of these elements, nor do we know much about the final purpose which they serve. The notion of ultimate ends is, indeed, ruled out. The laws of nature are statements of the interactive behavior of the parts, the

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[13] For the Neo-Thomist position see the writings of such men as Jacques Maritain, Christopher Dawson, E. Gilson. Of the dialectical theologians E. Brunner has made penetrating philosophical analyses, although his constructive position differs from that of Karl Barth. Criticisms of modern culture from a similar point of view are found in the writings of Paul Tillich and of Reinhold Niebuhr.

mechanical relations which obtain among them. This approach to the knowledge of the physical world has had a value which no one would deny. By ruling out not only final purposes but also the unpredictable actions of demonic spirits we have been able to understand nature in such a way as to remove a needless fear of it, and to institute techniques which enable us to control and employ it in the service of human values. This is all to the good, but evil has resulted from the rejection of the supernatural entirely, from the confidence that nature thus described is all there is. Before developing this further, let us see what analysis and atomism do to the social problem.

Society becomes a scene in which more or less mechanical, rather than organic, relations obtain among human atoms. There is a genuine religious ingredient here, of course, namely, the Christian emphasis upon the intrinsic worth of individual personality. But this has been generally overlooked. The modern world witnessed in politics the revolt against absolutism and the setting up of democracies which would recognize popular sovereignty and the rights of individuals. This is a good thing in itself but unsatisfactory as forming a political goal. The sense of community is lost, and there are found no worthy ends which society is to serve. The rejection of political democracy in certain areas and the threats we witness everywhere are, in part, due to the fatal lack of direction we have when individual rights are the only goals we pursue. Economic individualism, too, fails at the point where capitalism sets itself up as an end in itself

and thus implicitly denies the ultimately religious significance of life. The problem of the family and sex relations has become, in the spirit of modern philosophy, that of making the individuals involved as happy as possible. It is no longer a case of two becoming one, but of two human atoms remaining two, and associating together in an intimate relation with the hope that they as individuals may continue to be happy. A good deal of valuable insight into sex relations has resulted, but many couples are coming to see that even happiness in marriage is dependent upon their union being devoted to some higher purpose than that of producing a series of satisfactory sexual experiences. In education the method of analysis has led to the rejection of both metaphysics and theology as forming the center of the curriculum. The knowledge problem is divided into fields, and the fields into specialties. But no general principles guide the whole process, and no one seems to know the ultimate purpose of education as such.

It seems that direction is sorely needed everywhere and that the values of naturalism can be saved only by destroying their self-sufficiency and making them subservient to religious ends. Naturalism began with the confidence that a blessed earthly existence could be inaugurated if revealed religion with its crude superstitions were destroyed and the human faculties given free play. But we forgot that that which contained the superstitions contained also the basis for giving life its dignity and meaning. When man himself was investigated as a natural being he was seen to be the victim

of that very nature which he set out in the exuberance of the youth of modern history to conquer. In pursuit of his aim to dominate the world, modern man "has become its slave. . . . . He must now once more renounce the world in order to become its ruler and not its slave. Such is man's spiritual position today—at the close of modern history and on the eve of a new era." [14]

This in spirit, if not in detail, is the attitude toward the dialectic of modern history which underlies the conservative theologies. Naturalistic theism and pragmatic humanism are particularly objectionable to Barth, Brunner, et al. The Kingdom of God is not ushered in by human efforts; our social ideals are not of the nature of the divine; God is not discovered by man. God is completely separate from the natural and cannot be found by human faculties of knowing. The initiative is taken not by man but by God, who reveals himself, whose revelation breaks into the realm of nature. The tragedy of modern culture, including the theology it has produced, is that the goals pursued are actually temporal and instrumental, although they were set up as eternal and ultimate. The realm of nature was looked upon as an end in itself rather than as the basis for the realm of grace. But things which have importance and relative goodness as instrumental values become satanic powers when substituted for the ends which they were, in the first place, designed to serve.

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[14] N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936, pp. 181-182.

V

Many of us who were brought up as liberals or humanists may share much of this tragic view of recent history, and we may listen in humility and with a sense of sin to the criticisms of the theologies we have built. We know that our world is in desperate need of salvation, and we are convinced that religion possesses resources which, if made effective, would prevent impending death and lead us to new life. But somehow we are unable to abandon the belief that Western culture since the Renaissance has made some valuable contributions to religion as well as to the mastery of nature. If Christianity is thought of as a great tradition, we cannot but believe that the tradition must include modern religion. We are willing to admit the fallacy of taking the prejudices of our own day as eternally valid a priori principles. And because we are humble in that respect we are also unable to take any other one point in historic Christianity as the peculiarly true, or in any sense final, interpretation of the Christian religion, even though we may recognize the unusual importance of the contributions of such men as Thomas Aquinas and the Reformers.

What, then, are we to do? Can we retain the positive values of modernism and at the same time make our religion an effective critic of modern culture? Can we transcend the opposition between experimentalism and tradition in order to make them work together? In the following pages an attempt is made to move in that direction.

CHAPTER TWO

KNOWLEDGE AND FAITH

I

WHAT CAN WE KNOW, AND HOW CAN WE BE CERTAIN that our ideas are true? These are basic questions in the religious quest. Any method which is calculated to yield certain knowledge claims to stand on its own feet. The rationalist, for example, thinks it absurd that one should ask "the reason for reason." Spinoza, who ridiculed Descartes for postulating something beyond reason as the guarantor thereof, says that

> in order to know, there is no need to know that we know, much less to know that we know that we know. This is no more necessary than to know the nature of a circle before knowing the nature of a triangle. But, with these ideas, the contrary is the case: for, in order to know that I know, I must first know. Hence it is clear that certainty is nothing else than the subjective essence of a thing: in other words, the mode in which we perceive an actual reality is certainty.[1]

One who takes revelation as primary adopts an attitude which is very similar in many respects.

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[1] *On the Improvement of the Understanding.*

"How can you prove that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the incarnate Word?" Here you have the question of the spectator *par excellence.* Let me in turn ask you this question: "Would a revelation which is capable of proof still be a revelation?" In proving an assertion we link it up with higher relations. What kind of a revelation would it be that is subordinate to a superior principle? Say, to reason? What manner of God is he who can be proved? Revelation means that what is said here is truth recognized as being true only by him who permits it to be told to him. It is truth carrying its trustworthiness within itself, just as all rational truth carries its trustworthiness in iself. It is, as Calvin expresses it, *autopistic.* Looking at it from the human angle, what manner of faith is the faith that must be propped up by proof? It would be something like a suitor who, on the point of asking the lady of his choice for her heart and hand, were to employ a detective to spy out her character. Faith is the venture by which one trusts the truth of a word, not because one is courageous and tries it out for once, but because one cannot do otherwise under the constraint of the word.[2]

Apparently a faith in the inherent trustworthiness of the Christian revelation or of Spinozistic rationalism must be present if we are not to ask embarrassing questions. If we do persist in asking why we should trust reason or revelation it means that we are attached to some other method of gaining knowledge. And it may be that someone else will point out that attachment to our own method is also an act of faith. Allowing this to stand for the moment, let me say that

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[2] H. Emil Brunner, *The Theology of Crisis,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1935, pp. 38-39.

it seems to me most fruitful to define knowledge as those ideas which are empirically verifiable. It also seems that when we analyze the nature of what all of us would agree to class as knowledge, it turns out to be that which is repeatedly verified in our individual and social experiences. To limit knowledge in this way seems to many people to do away not only with theology of revealed religion but with natural theology as well. But this is the case only if we make the further assumption that all ideas which are incapable of empirical verification are *ipso facto* unimportant. Now there is a tendency of the philosophy of experimentalism to say that any problem which cannot be solved according to the empirical method is a meaningless problem. This is, of course, a tautology. The problem is meaningless precisely because it is insoluble according to the prescribed methods of the philosophy of experimentalism. But because we cannot verify in experience such a belief as that Christ is the Son of God, it does not follow that this is not the case or that people will cease to be concerned about the question. There are a great many ideas which are parts of our consciousness, and which have great importance in our lives, which are held on faith. We must come to the point where we recognize the fact that although certain, or even probable, knowledge is a highly desirable thing, only a few of our ideas may be so classified. It merely confuses the issue to insist upon calling our faith objects known objects. The theologian should not pose as one who is always and consistently stating verifiable propositions. That he should be an earnest seeker of truth is obvious,

but it is equally obvious that he has a Christian bias. He need not be ashamed of his bias so long as he clearly recognizes the difference between the knowledge elements and the faith elements in his theology.

II

It is wise, I believe, to limit the meaning of the word "knowledge" to the way in which experimentalism uses that term. An important mark of the difference between opinion and knowledge is that the latter is capable of some sort of demonstration and verification. The type of knowledge which has the best chance of becoming common property is that which can be verified in experience. This means that what the realist calls inferential knowledge—that is, arguing from observed phenomena back to an antecedent reality which gave rise to the phenomena—we shall not be able to call knowledge at all. Logical demonstration appears to have the property of certainty while empirical knowledge is at best probable. On the other hand, logical demonstration about the existent world always proceeds from undemonstrated assumptions, and we can see that the history of thought contains quite a variety of these assumptions, each set having posed as a group of self-evident truths. Thus we have the spectacle of a number of rationalistic systems, each claiming certain knowledge about the inner nature of things, but each giving a picture of the universe quite different from the others.

On the realist side, we may admit the legitimacy of of the question as to whether there is not, after all, a

real nature out of which experiences of one sort or another arise. To be sure, we have no way of knowing with certainty what the "ultimate reality" is, but it is reasonable to postulate by an act of faith the existence of an inclusive matrix out of which our various experiences and categories come and to which they refer. Not only is such a faith legitimate; it is also necessary. The experimentalist's own account of knowledge rests upon the assumption that there is at least some kind of environment in which the organism has its experiences. It seems that we not only *may*, but *must*, postulate the existence of a real and genuine state of affairs to account for even experimental knowledge. This point of view has something in common with Santayana when he writes that the "assurance of the not-given is involved in action, in expectation, in fear, hope or want: I call it animal faith. The object of faith is the substantial energetic thing encountered in action, whatever this thing may be in itself. . . . ." [3]

If we adopt this point of view we can retain the advantages of experimentalism. We shall always be aware of the fact that our knowledge is tentative; we shall expect future experience to bring revision of present theories; we shall be in a position to avoid any dogmatism which would lead us to perpetuate fallacies in the name of certain knowledge. This in itself has some religious values, not the least of which is that there can be no final refutation of a "religious view of the

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[3] "Brief History of My Opinions," in *Contemporary American Philosophy*, ed. by G. P. Adams and W. P. Montague, Macmillan Co., New York, II, 255.

world." Any particular scientific picture is an abstraction from nature as experienced. Our point of view can also retain the advantages of realism. By making the realistic postulate as an act of faith we acknowledge that there is more than can be verified, that our appreciations, moral activity, and scientific procedures are not rootless, but are under the control of a Reality which, although it can never be known by the experimental method, is nevertheless that which gave us birth, is that with which we are always partially in contact, and is the goal of our quest.

Let us clearly understand that, although these remarks indicate the necessity of assuming a Reality in which our activities and interpretations take place, the argument does not necessitate identifying the Reality with the God of religion. Nothing whatever has been said about the content of the ultimate nature of things. We are merely persuaded that it is reasonable to assume the real existence of a "that" out of which experiences of all kinds arise. In order to give this a religious interpretation we quite frankly and admittedly make another act of faith. At the same time we refuse to admit that one faith will do as well as any other. Whatever postulates we make about the God of nature must be grounded in genuine experience, should illumine the experience we have, cannot contradict empirically verified fact, and when acted upon should lead to desirable consequences.

Is there, for example, among our experiences of nature any which suggest that there is a God worthy of our trust, a God who is dependable? All philosophies

and all scientific procedures rest upon the assumption that nature in one of her phases is a scene of predictive order and law. So far as it is experienced in this fashion, so far as we do actually make reliable predictions, then so far it is a fact that nature is trustworthy and thus possesses one of the characteristics of God. But even when nature is experienced as vague, when we face problems for which nature seems to provide no reliable means of solution, when we have decided that nothing can be done, even on such occasions we may discover that in time a solution is forthcoming. On the basis of such experiences and whatever knowledge of the orderliness of nature we possess, the religious man will go much further and trust his God as one who may be depended upon to do all that needs to be done. Of course he cannot prove this God any more than he can prove the opposite. He finds, however, that desirable consequences follow upon his acting according to the faith that when he does his very best there is a God who may be depended upon to bring things ultimately to their proper fulfillment. His life, with its little meanings, is given significance when thought of in relation to the Meaning of all things. There are, to be sure, some empirical tests as to specific ways in which the God of nature can be trusted. We have found, for example, that prayer is not a reliable means of bringing rain or of delivering us from floods. We merely do the best we can to make our proper adjustments, employing to the full our experimental knowledge, and beyond that we must trust. That there are experiences which suggest the untrustworthi-

ness of nature we also recognize. There is at best probability, and not certainty, as to which of these reveals the more basic characteristic of nature. The type of attitude which is religious issues from the conviction that God is worthy of our complete trust. Although we cannot establish with finality the truth of this conviction we can recognize its probability and its value in fostering healthy, dynamic, meaningful living.

Nature as experienced fulfills other requirements of the divine, one of these being its lovableness. That men of all ages have been held by the spell of natural beauty is abundantly demonstrated by a vast literature. And it is probably a profound love of nature which has prompted men to want to know more about her. The love of God and a faith in the intelligibility of his behavior lie at the heart of whatever spiritual freedom man possesses. When man loses his sense of kinship with the spiritual foundation of nature and looks upon the latter as something merely to be used and not as an object of love, he inevitably comes to the depressing conclusion that the tables may be turned and that man may be used and thus reduced to slavery by this spiritless nature. It is quite conceivable that all of our scientific ventures should cease and that a new world-weariness should engulf us. Here again we admit that there are experiences of nature which do suggest that it is incapable of being loved. Let us be reminded once more that our discussion at this point is in an area where demonstration is impossible. There are indeed many attitudes, each of which is partially justified by nature as it is experienced. But the religious attitude

can be cultivated, an attitude which produces the conviction that at the heart of nature is God, deeply and completely lovable.

III

The relation between knowledge and faith is the same, whether we consider our experience of nature or our experience of values. Even though value theory may not yield certain knowledge of God, we may find value considerations which would make faith in God reasonable and desirable. Quite apart from theology, any theory of value must take account of the distinction ordinarily drawn among "valuing," "valued," and "valuable." That human organisms go through acts of valuing is a fact. That things are valued, and valued in different ways, is also a fact. The question is whether we can stop at this subjective level. Are things valuable merely because they are valued? Even within the experience of an individual there is frequently the opposition between the statement, "I enjoy this," and the question, "Is this enjoyable?" Ordinary common sense shows us that the "valuable" is not completely identical with the immediate act of valuing. It is a justifiable presupposition of musical education that tastes can be cultivated. It is reasonable to assume that the comments of the trained critic are more meaningful than the simple "I like it," or "I do not like it," of any Tom, Dick, or Harry. Any sensitive person is unwilling to rest content with his initial judgments of good and evil. So far as his experience is concerned he wonders whether he *should* attribute good-

ness to a situation just as he wonders whether he is correct in his judgments of fact.

We have discussed experimental knowledge as applied to that aspect of nature which is sufficiently orderly to permit the making of verifiable predictions. Can experimentalism throw any light on the present problem? It is encouraging to find that Dewey takes seriously the sort of issue referred to in the above paragraph. He lists a good many instances of the fundamental opposition between "valued" and "valuable" in order further to make impressive the distinction. Some of these are: "satisfying" and "satisfactory"; "loved" and "lovable"; "admired" and "admirable"; "trusted" and "trustworthy." [4] He also says that "instead of there being no disputing about tastes, they are the one thing worth disputing about, if by 'dispute' is signified discussion involving reflective inquiry. Taste, if we use the word in its best sense, is the outcome of experience brought cumulatively to bear on the intelligent appreciation of real worth of likings and enjoyments." [5]

The subjectivity of values may, in the first place, be likened to the subjectivity and relativity of sensations. No one would argue that there is a complete identity between the object of initial and uncontrolled perception and the object of scientific knowledge. We certainly should not have made much progress in our

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[4] *The Quest for Certainty,* G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1929, pp. 260-261. The whole of Chap. X, "The Construction of the Good," is directly applicable to the problem here under discussion.

[5] *Ibid.,* p. 262.

knowledge of the physical world if we had stopped with such assertions as, "It looks like this to me even though it may look different to you." Such a situation is not knowledge but the starting point of experimental inquiry. The method of reflective operations transforms objects of immediate experience into objects of scientific knowledge. In the area of value we may take the unreflective likings or enjoyments as merely problematic. True value is to be equated with those enjoyments which come as the result of intelligent action. This involves knowledge of the conditions through which given values may be created. A teacher of art once told his students in the introductory course that they had no right to say whether they liked or disliked an artistic work because they did not have sufficient knowledge. When asked by the students if taste was not a matter of personal opinion, he replied that until one knew something of the techniques involved in the various media of art, that is, the conditions through which creative work is carried on, he could not appreciate the skills and hence had nothing meaningful to say in the way of criticism. Objects of scientific knowledge and objects of genuine value judgments are both the end products of intelligent action. If values were merely the present likings we happen to have, they would be precarious rather than subject to control. A theory that value consists of chance likings also would induce the habit of waiting for the world as it is to excite our interest rather than stimulating the type of creative activity which would result in making some precious things secure and leading to new value

experiences. Dewey finds that the "fundamental trouble with the current empirical theory of values is that it merely formulates and justifies the socially prevailing habit of regarding enjoyments as they are actually experienced as values in and of themselves." [6]

This analogy is perfectly sound although it does not pretend to remove entirely the subjective element from value judgments. It serves the purpose of freeing values from chance and unpredictable enjoyments and introduces the possibility of control and intelligent creation. A purely subjective factor is still present, however, because the very conditions we find it important to investigate, and the goal toward which our activity is directed, are both dictated by the original chance enjoyments, even though the end product is undoubtedly a new type of value. For example, I happen to bite into a round and ruddy object with the concomitant enjoyment of a particularly agreeable taste. This presents a problem situation. What is the nature of the object which yielded this possibility of value and how can I make the enjoyment secure? I am therefore prompted to learn about apples and the conditions necessary for growing and maintaining the trees which will bear this fruit. Knowledge of the conditions upon which the pleasurable sensation of tasting the apple depends is the important factor in making this enjoyment a value. But we still have discovered no criterion for judging whether or not we ought to like the apple, or whether it was worth while to put

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 259.

forth the effort to set up controls which make secure the possibility of having this kind of enjoyment. Dewey finds the materials for such a criterion in a second analogy between our knowledge of nature and our knowledge of value. Experimental knowledge never gives us insight into the inner nature of an object divorced from its relation to other things. Rather, it leads us to an understanding of the mutual dependence and interactions among events. Our natural knowledge is a matrix of the problematic situation from which we start, the operations we perform in finding the objects in question, the interrelations of objects of scientific knowledge, and the implications for further inquiry. So in the area of value we cannot judge whether the "enjoyed" is also "enjoyable" as an isolated event. We have pointed out that value is related to the conditions upon which it depends. Now we see that judgment does not end at this point, but that we must estimate the consequences to which a particular enjoyment leads.

All of this gives us a point of view from which intelligent inquiry can be carried on concerning what is valuable. We start from a situation in which certain things are immediately, though vaguely, enjoyed or felt to be good. We then ask the relation of this kind of experience to the factors which are necessary to produce the imagined value and make it as dependable as possible. After we have arrived at the valued object the question arises as to whether the object is also valuable. The only method of dealing with this query is that of seeing to what this particular value leads. It

becomes valuable if it leads to desirable consequences. Is it not true that we actually employ this method in dealing with practical moral problems? When one becomes reflective concerning the question as to whether he ought to engage in a certain line of activity, it is obvious that he will attempt to relate this activity to goods which he wishes to conserve and to anticipate so far as possible the ends to which the activity will lead. It is only in this sense that values can be known in a way comparable to our knowledge of nature. But all these known values are conditional and instrumental. There is no possibility of achieving verifiable truth concerning a supreme value. Nevertheless the experimental approach to the theory of value has religious implications. It causes us to concentrate our attention upon ideals which have some chance of becoming actualized and upon the practical methods we must employ for realizing them. Since no value can be judged apart from its relations to other things, we are saved from a harmful dogmatism. Devotion to God means devotion to the best which we can visualize in any particular situation. There is, however, another type of religious experience which remains a mystery to experimentalism. There are times when the religious person feels the call of the divine command. The God to whom he responds on such occasions is the unconditional source of all value, or the final ideal whose validity does not depend upon that to which it leads. Our whole argument up to this point is designed to show that we cannot have certain knowledge of such a value. We raise the question for a second

time as to whether it is legitimate to pass beyond knowledge to a reasoned faith.

Formerly we found it reasonable to adopt the experimentalist definition of knowledge and to make the realistic postulate as an act of faith. Here it is equally reasonable, I believe, to adopt the experimentalist approach to the knowledge of values and to supplement this with a faith in the reality of a supreme value. In every value situation these two things are involved. Empirically, we know any specific value only in relation to other things. But there is also the faith that the whole which underlies specific situations is absolutely valuable. All of our searches for the best available answers to questions concerning the conduct of life rest upon the assumption that life itself is worth while.

A faith which finds in God the source and center of all value, which values personal existence only because it makes the enjoyment of God possible, and hopes for immortality only because it hopes for the vision of God, which founds its morality upon the sole value of God and the sacredness of his creatures—such a faith must remain dissatisfied with an approach which, however disguisedly, makes him a means to an end, however noble the end in human esteem.[7]

IV

Belief in a God who is both the center of value and the highest ideal is a matter of faith. Part of the

[7] H. R. Niebuhr, "Value-Theory and Theology," in *The Nature of Religious Experience,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1937, p. 103.

business of theology is to indicate relevant considerations which suggest that the faith is not entirely unreasonable. Let us consider the hypothetical case of two individuals who are disputing the advisability of a given course of action. Both are vitally concerned but they find themselves in sharp disagreement. One person believes the action is good because it leads to desirable consequences. The other says the action is bad because the consequences are undesirable. If friendly and co-operative investigation is to continue, it is likely that each will try to point out to the other that there are further implications which have been overlooked. If one will investigate these he may find that the consequences are not so bad, or so good, as they first appeared.

Let us imagine, however, that as the discussion proceeds the two people do not come to a common ground of desire. When they have exhausted their imaginative ability in the attempt to anticipate those things to which the action under discussion will lead, it is still the case that one person finds these desirable while the other finds them undesirable. What are they to do at this point? Although a good deal of important reflective inquiry has taken place, the decision appears ultimately to rest upon personal preferences. The practical solution may be to fight it out. The issue is then settled for the time being and it is a clear case of identifying right with might.

If, on the other hand, there is the continued hope of reaching agreement, it means that the two parties are acting upon the assumption that there is a good which

always stands in judgment upon the best valuations man can make. Suppose they have a religious faith that God himself is the supreme value and that men are called upon to obey the will of God. They will then discover that they are asking themselves what God wants rather than what they want. Still, if they assume further that they have some mysterious way of knowing precisely what the will of God is, it is probable that each will be certain that he has the divine truth while the other is under the control of the devil. If they act upon this belief, and if they should come to blows, the struggle would very likely be peculiarly violent because each would feel that he was fighting the Lord's battle as well as his own. This is why religion is potentially a dangerous thing.

However, unless we are willing to admit that in some instances the good is nothing more than that which wins out, must we not have an implicit faith that there is a God defined as the true and highest value? If we join to this faith the pragmatic denial of our ability to achieve certain knowledge of the absolute good, we have a point of view which prevents both the identification of right with might and the fighting of cruel wars in behalf of what is incorrectly thought to be the will of God. All this is far more than a mere academic question. It is relevant to the tragic and destructive results of intense nationalism. Without the trust in a God who transcends all human divisions and to whom alone absolute commitment is to be given, what is to prevent the various states from demanding unquestioning and unconditional loyalty of their subjects? That which is

really temporal and partial becomes the substitute for what is eternal and supreme. It means the sacrifice of genuine religion and the return to the worship of tribal gods.

Further analysis of those factors which influence human behavior may also lead us to see the reasonableness of faith in the God of value. Psychoanalysis has called the attention of modern man to the unconscious drives which underlie behavior. Whether one believes that the basic factor is sex or an urge to power or something else depends upon the psychoanalytic school to which he has been converted. But all of us know that there are psychic depths below the level of consciousness which play an important role in every decision we make. Some of these are associated with more or less instinctive wants, others with experiences of early childhood which are remembered only dimly if at all. These factors may become the source of a vague imperative to which the mature man unconsciously responds. Such an imperative is not to be confused with morality. One tries to understand these drives as best he can and to recognize their presence in order that he may become more free to make reflective moral judgments.

There is, in the second place, the force of convention or the customs of the society in which a man lives. Without realizing that these are customs, one may feel an obligation to live in accordance with them as though they were eternal moral principles. At the reflective level, one comes to the understanding that they are relative and he tries to estimate their worth and his

relation to them. He may continue to obey the conventions habitually, but he knows them for what they are. Conflict arises within his soul as he thinks carefully about entrenched customs. For one thing, he may come to view some of these as ridiculous or even harmful and he is thus tempted to break the rules. On the other hand, he realizes that to do so may lead to social disapproval, a consequence which he does not like. Again, if the customs have been officially legalized, he is confronted with the possibility of punishment as a result of detected infringement.

Another type of conflict may arise. A given course of action may win the approval of those whom one greatly admires although it brings down upon his head the disapproval of those who possess political and economic power, even though no law has been broken. But when one turns against himself those who hold economic and political power he finds that his security is threatened. How greatly our decisions are influenced by calculations regarding security! "Is it safe to do this?" becomes a question of tremendous importance. The ethical and reflective man will attempt to understand all of these factors, but the more he understands them the more pressing becomes the question, "What is right?" Reflection can give us only one answer. "You ought to follow a certain course of action if you want to have certain results." The moral imperative, so far as we can analyze it, reduces to a logical imperative. There is never an unconditional command. One *must* act in a given manner only because

there are other things which he wants as the end product.

So far does logical man go, but spiritual man is still unsatisfied. Conscious of many rational and irrational factors which may influence his decision, he retires to a cell of quietness where there is the opportunity to listen. Having made as many calculations as possible and having submitted these to rigid criticism, he waits for the righteous command which is unconditional. In the face of the first dim awareness of the imperative he remains critical of its content. He asks, "Am I not still afraid? Is this not merely my desire for security posing as the voice of God?" Again he tries to eliminate so far as possible all triviality and petty calculation. The important and far-reaching consequences of his decision are not forgotten, but the decision must have a reference to the eternal as well. Finally he receives an intimation of the ultimate and noninstrumental significance of what is to be done. What is this? Is it his early conditioning which has impressed upon him the feeling that certain conventions are divinely good? Is it the claims which nation or society make upon him? Is it his "better self" which he wishes to become? Is it ideal ends which his own imagination has projected? Or is it God? Perhaps it is one of these or a combination of them all. We must forever be skeptical concerning the content of this command. There are religious movements today which dangerously simplify the process whereby one may place himself under the "guidance" of God. No matter how critical he remains, however, spiritual man does

not escape the fact of that experience in which something lays a claim upon him and elicits his absolute commitment. My point of view by this time should be sufficiently well understood to make it unnecessary to say that I am here not attempting to give a logically coercive argument for the existence of God. The type of experience which we have analyzed may be plausibly explained in a number of ways, but when it is seriously faced in connection with other considerations the faith in God becomes not only understandable but altogether reasonable. If there is, as Brunner puts it, "a challenging authority which has the right to judge my actions," [8] even those actions of mine which seem to me very noble indeed, that authority can be none other than God.

The distinction between the significance of present activity in terms of consequences and in terms of an ultimate reference is very important for religious faith. So far as knowledge is concerned, the individual is able to estimate the value of the present situation only by anticipating other values which may emerge. No act has any known significance except in relation to other things and particularly to the future. The consummation of all the activities of the individual is his death, but his life may still have value in relation to his children's generation. Whatever significance may belong to a given generation beyond its own life span is found only in later generations. The sensitive and reflective person can have continued zest for doing what he

[8] *The Divine Imperative,* tr. by Olive Wyon, Macmillan Co., New York, 1937, p. 28.

thinks is the good only so long as he has a hope that things will be better in the future even though he cannot be present to enjoy them. Some interpretation of history involving the idea of progress would naturally belong to this point of view. If we assume that history may move toward a more or less utopian situation we can readily see the implications of this philosophy. Presumably we are the heirs of the work and sacrifices, as well as of the errors and sins, of former generations. The latter are not here to enjoy the fruits of their good works nor to suffer the consequences of their sins. The meaning of their activities is related exclusively to the historical period in which our generation holds the stage. We in turn live out our lives and calculate their value in terms of what is to follow after we have gone. Progressive development may be thought of as an indefinite process of improvement or as issuing ultimately in a perfect temporal order. In any case it is only those who happen to be on the scene when the utopia is ushered in for whom the activity of all past generations has anything resembling ultimate significance.

In contrast we find in the Augustinian philosophy of history a point of view which gives to the decisions of every generation an eternal reference. The goal of the historical process is a situation which transcends history. It is pictured in a manner similar to the Jewish expectations of a Messianic age when absolute justice will prevail and the kingdom of righteousness will appear. But the participants in this age are not merely those who happen to populate the earth at the time

when the kingdom comes. All who have lived are brought back to life and the good are permitted the unsurpassed enjoyment of the kingdom while the wicked are subjected to their just punishment. Neither the historical utopian notion nor the final Judgment Day involving the resurrection of the flesh can be a matter of knowledge. They are myths which grow out of the kind of hope and life feeling upon which we act, and must not be confused with realistic predictions. It is important for us to see that it is the latter myth which takes into account both the measuring of value in terms of consequences and the eternal reference of human decision. Christianity has always looked upon the Kingdom of God in the Jewish fashion as the goal of history. Without the hope in the divine outcome of the time process the dynamic of religious living is lost. Until this hope was more or less secularized in modernism by linking it with the idea of progress, Christianity also thought of the Kingdom in Platonic terms as a timeless reality which always forms the standard of goodness for any particular historial period. Thus our decisions and our actions are not merely means to a desirable end; they are also immediately judged relatively to the eternal good.

V

Among the objections to the point of view advanced above may be that which proceeds from the standpoint of mental hygiene. If it be admitted that values as known are always relative to given purposes, why should we not adjust our emotional lives to that fact

and let the matter rest there? Why insist upon absolutes for which no cogent arguments can be given? Why encourage people to take their decisions more seriously than the practical situation demands? Will this not lead to neurotic guilt feelings and thus place an unhealthy impediment in the way of intelligent action? Religion has already played its part in leading to mental disorders. Would it not be better, therefore, to cultivate an attitude which leads away from faith rather than toward it?

Such questions are entirely relevant and they proceed from an estimate of religious faith which is in many ways valid. But all this gives merely one side of the picture. Jung has said that whereas religious factors have played a role in the emotional disturbances of the patients he has seen, it is also true that health is not restored unless there is a recovery of something very much like the positive and particular religious faith which may have been lost. While some of Jung's remarks sound more like the utterances of a prophet than the cautious statements of the scientist, we must not forget that his discussion of the religious theme does have some connection with his intimate knowledge of the psychic life of many patients. The following passage definitely implies that far from being exclusively a detriment to mental health, religious faith is a necessary ingredient thereof:

> Everyday reasonableness, sound human judgment, and science as a compendium of common sense, certainly help us over a good part of the road; yet they do not go beyond that frontier of human life which surrounds the common-

place and matter-of-fact, the merely average and normal. They afford, after all, no answer to the question of spiritual suffering and its innermost meaning. A psychoneurosis must be understood as the suffering of a human being who has not discovered what life means for him. But all creativeness in the realm of the spirit as well as every psychic advance of man arises from a state of mental suffering, and it is spiritual stagnation, psychic sterility, which causes this state.

The doctor who realizes this truth sees a territory opened before him which he approaches with the greatest hesitation. He is now confronted with the necessity of conveying to his patient the healing fiction, the meaning that quickens—for it is this that the patient longs for, over and above all that reason and science can give him. The patient is looking for something that will take possession of him and give meaning and form to the confusion of his neurotic mind.[9]

The religious faith we have been discussing is one which provides a person with a sense of the meaning and significance of life. Modern man is the unfortunate product of several generations which tried to find a satisfactory existence without reference to the eternal. Lewis Mumford mentions something very similar to this in connection with architecture. Having pointed out that it was an integral part of medieval culture to have organized shelters for the life of the spirit, he says that

Our architecture has passed from the cave to the garden, from the monument to the dwelling house. But in throw-

[9] C. J. Jung, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, tr. by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1933, pp. 259-260.

ing open our buildings to the daylight and the outdoors, we will forget, at our peril, the co-ordinate need for quiet, for darkness, for inner privacy, for retreat. The cloister in both its public and private form is a constant element in the life of men in cities. . . . . Today, the degradation of the inner life is symbolized by the fact that the only place sacred from interruption is the private toilet.[10]

We could dismiss this remark as being merely amusing if it were not for the fact that it reflects such a pathetic situation. Not only has modern man suffered a degradation of the inner life, he has also become disillusioned concerning the reality of the saving power of placing his hope in material and time-bound progress. Thus he is subject to a genuine psychic difficulty which necessarily results from a sense of futility and the lack of a worthy and controlling purpose. Religious faith at its best can certainly help to meet this difficulty.

It is true, of course, that an exaggerated worry about doing the will of God may lead to unhealthy guilt feelings. But the sense of sin, about which much is being said in the contemporary revival of theological conservatism, is not necessarily morbid. What is being defended here is the notion that our experimental knowledge of values has very definite limits. We must also retain a skepticism about the true worth of even the highest ideals which we recognize. These limits and this skepticism are reinforced by the faith that God as supreme value is the norm against which all other values are to be measured. Even though we have not said anything about *what* God wills, the faith that

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[10] *The Culture of Cities,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1938, p. 29.

there *is* a divine will should have the psychological effect of purifying the motives of men. No one, I believe, would seriously argue that the attempt to act only from motives which have been made as pure as possible is a sign of ill health, especially when we link this with an honest searching of soul. Conflict arises only when we try to cover up our really sordid motives with a veneer of respectability.

Many illustrations could be given of the practical bearing of theology as related to theory of value. A college student was trying for the first time to think with a high degree of thoroughness about the problem of value, and was particularly interested in the different implications of the subjective point of view and the objective point of view. He wondered whether those things which appear to be integral parts of the ideology of totalitarian states—the race philosophy, systematic suppression of minority groups, frank aggression against weaker nations, complete subjection of the individual to the will of the state—issue from a subjective or from an objective theory of value. This is an extremely interesting question because it is capable of being answered in two ways. First, it can be answered according to the assumption that there are absolute values. Since, however, these values cannot be known empirically, and are not subject to public verification, there must be an intuitive approach which leads to knowledge of what they are. But not all men are equally blessed with the mystic sense. Fortunate—or unfortunate—indeed is the nation in which appears a leader possessed of an infallible access to the realm of

true value. If given the power of king, priest, and prophet, he is in a position not only to convey to his people the revelation vouchsafed to him, but to make it politically effective as well. On these assumptions the people are wise if they place their complete trust in their leader and unquestioningly obey his every command. This may involve persecution of one's friends and the sacrifice of all one has for the alleged good of the state.

As the student's thought moved along these lines he realized that it may be a bad thing to assume the objectivity of values. Far better would it be to argue for the subjectivity and relativity of all values so that the interests of as many individuals and social groups as possible would find their place in a society. Since there is no ultimate value, it follows that no one can speak with final authority, not even prophet, priest, or king. Thus all individuals and groups have a right to be heard. Then the student thought about his recent reading of Plato's *Republic* and of the character Thrasymachus who defined justice as "the interest of the stronger." Upon further reflection he realized that one reason why Thrasymachus gave this definition was that he had no faith in a real meaning of justice. If we are to assume that values are only subjective and relative it is altogether consistent with this theory for a group to seize power and ruthlessly impose its own interests upon all others. Partial value is raised to the level of the absolute. So, it seems, we can explain the phenomenon of crude dictatorship either from the objective or from the subjective point of view.

But theology can give a helpful answer to this problem. God is defined positively as the supreme value, and negatively as transcending all known or instrumental values. The advantages of both relativism and absolutism are retained while the dangerous disadvantages are avoided. Since there is a faith in God to whom alone unconditional loyalty is to be given, there is a constant check upon the tendency of any one group to make its own human interests universal. Justice is divine and not the interest of the stronger. On the other hand, there is no one who has infallible knowledge of the will of God, and so true religion will encourage the method of co-operative investigation into the conditions and consequences of all values, and will foster the provision of opportunities for all men to listen quietly for the divine voice. We need both a profound faith in the God of absolute value and an incurable skepticism about the finality of any human ideal.

VI

The opposition between experimentalism and tradition as analyzed in the first chapter, and the discussion of the reasonableness of a faith in God as based on our knowledge of nature and of value, bring us necessarily to a crucial problem. The philosophy of experimentalism is highly influential in many areas of modern life. In religion it leads logically to pragmatic humanism, but we have suggested that there are essential features of the religious consciousness which humanism is unable to explain. Furthermore, humanism seems quite willing to sacrifice the distinctiveness of

Christian tradition. Thus we find the strange contrast in the modern world between the far-reaching influence of experimentalism and the attempt of contemporary theology to recover a boldness in proclaiming the importance of the historic Christian faith. Both experimentalism and traditionalism have values which ought to be retained, and the problem we set for ourselves was that of transforming two conflicting things into two elements of a synthetic theological method.

In this chapter we found that nature is experienced in a variety of ways, but that natural knowledge is particularly concerned with those features which lend themselves to prediction and control. Only those ideas which can be empirically verified are properly to be classified as knowledge. In this connection, however, we found that two steps of faith were reasonable. The first was that of making the realistic postulate that there is an objective reality which forms the basis of our experimental knowledge. The second led us to attribute the divine characteristics of trustworthiness and lovableness to this reality. This whole discussion was designed to show that while faith in God is legitimate, human processes of knowing can give us little assurance as to what God is.

Then we came to the problem of God and value. Once again we discovered the superiority of the experimental approach. The only values whose validity can be tested are instrumental in character. We can investigate the conditions for making secure our enjoyments and ideals, and we can test their desirability by examining the consequences to which they lead.

Beyond our experimental knowledge of values we encountered a number of considerations which point to the reasonableness of a faith in God as the supreme value. Although we argued for faith in the fact of a divine will, we insisted upon a skepticism regarding the specific content of what God commands us to do.

All of this leads inevitably to the problem of revelation. No matter how persistently we hold to the experimental method, so long as we supplement this with a faith in God we must attribute to God some characteristics and we must think of his commands as possessing some definite content. Here is a further reach of faith, and the Christian theologian passes beyond the task of guiding the way to a faith *that* God exists. He now has the further problem of showing that our ideas as to *what* God is are to be derived from the Christian tradition.

CHAPTER THREE

REVELATION OF GOD

I

A CHARACTER IN ONE OF OSCAR WILDE'S NOVELS WHO prided himself on his disbelief was accused of being a skeptic. "Never!" he replied. "Skepticism is the beginning of faith." Wilde showed profound insight in this remark, because anyone who takes genuine pride in his disbelief can ill afford to face the consequences of true skepticism. It was Augustine's doubting which paved the way for his discovery of God. A partial skepticism is, to be sure, one source of bold and definite disbelief in matters religious, but the other source is a positive affirmation of the supremacy of human reason and the ability of man to win a satisfactory life without divine aid. In modern history it was the age of enlightenment which dispensed with revelation, and it did this not so much because of its lack of belief as because of its certainty that revelation could add nothing to the truth attainable by the natural faculties of the human mind. Contemporary man has inherited the skeptical attitude toward revelation, but he also has lost confidence in the unlimited power of human reason. Thus he may be on the path toward that type of skepticism which leads to faith.

A warning or two may be in order here. The older apologists appeared to take delight in pointing out the limitations in human processes of knowing. It is evident that in certain instances they feared the destructive results of rational analysis, and so whatever faults they discovered in procedures of human thinking they took as evidence that man is incapable of critically evaluating divine revelation. But if this is the case then it is also true that reason is unable to defend the truth of revelation. The sane attitude to adopt is one which rigorously attempts to avoid making either "knowledge" or "faith" an honorific word. If we choose to define knowledge as empirically verifiable ideas then it is obvious that we do have something which can be classified as at least highly probable knowledge. Let us frankly admit that we want as many verified ideas as possible, but that life compels us to make acts of faith in which are contained ideas incapable of verification. Whenever philosophy asserts in a disparaging manner that faith judgments are meaningless, it thereby severs itself from an area which is of vital importance to men and women. On the other hand, religion does a disservice to itself and to mankind generally when it uses matters of faith as a basis for such an inclusive and rigid system of revealed truth that conflict occurs between the supposed religious revelation and verified fact.

There are several theories of the relation between knowledge and revelation which are to be rejected, one of which was referred to by implication in the above remarks, namely, the view that these two things are

deadly rivals. On this assumption, if we are religiously minded we shall point to natural knowledge as the instrument of the devil. If we adopt the secular sentiment we shall insist upon the impossibility of demonstrating the finality of a revelation, and so the matter rests. Again, ordinary processes of knowing are sometimes analyzed as leading to contradictions from which reason can find no escape. Revelation is appealed to as the only method by which the contradiction can be resolved. It is true that knowledge frequently runs into contradictions, but theology, particularly the dialectical theology, dwells unduly upon this fact. It was the Hegelian philosophy which emphasized contradictions in the understanding and then argued for a higher reason in which the thesis and antithesis became parts of an inclusive synthesis. Dialectical theology rejects the Hegelian rationalism but continues to give an exaggerated importance to paradox as a basis for demanding revelation in which to find a resolution. We do, of course, encounter contradictions in our attempt to know ourselves and our world, and some of the more profound of these are peculiarly significant for religion. But, as Professor G. H. Sabine puts the question, "What is there really to say about paradox except that it arises from a more or less systematic exploitation of a double standard of reference, and what can even a dialectician do about it except remove the ambiguities?" [1] In the third place, there is the scholastic point of view which has the merit of recognizing the positive

[1] "Logic and Social Studies," in *The Philosophical Review*, LXVIII, 165.

worth of natural knowledge so far as it can carry us, and using revelation as a supplement rather than as a rival. However, there is difficulty in the notion of two orders of knowledge and attributing a higher importance to what is known through revelation. It is less confusing if revelation is not called knowledge at all, and if we so define the latter term that we know what we mean by it, and do not confuse it with matters of faith.

Revelation ordinarily refers to the activity of God in which he takes the initiative in disclosing his reality and character to man. Experimental knowledge refers to that type of human activity which concentrates on the features of experience about which verifiable predictions can be made. Knowledge, we have discovered, falls far short of attaining complete certainty concerning the existence and nature of God, but there are experiences which lead us to a faith in a Being who controls nature and who is the supreme value. If such a Being exists, and if man has not the intellectual equipment to find him, then the religious person asks if it is not reasonable to assume that God will seek out man and speak to him. The skeptic poses two questions in this connection: If God is the most valuable object of man's quest, why is he so terribly hard to find? If there is a God and he wants to speak to us, why does he not do so unambiguously and in a voice so commanding that we cannot fail to hear him? There is no conclusive answer to these questions, although empirical considerations show us that the objections implied are not fatal to religious trust. Many experienced values are ex-

ceedingly difficult of attainment and there is even a fairly high correlation between the amount of effort expended and the relative importance of the value achieved. It is not unreasonable to suppose, then, that the experience of the highest value would be a somewhat arduous process. Again, conversation depends upon two persons. The one who speaks needs the listening response of the other. If we do not hear the voice of God it is possible that the explanation lies not in the fact that God does not speak, but that we do not listen. There are types of attitude, as has been suggested, which make possible the hearing of God or the feeling that God has taken possession of one.

So far, however, we have indicated only that kind of revelation in which there comes to man an assurance of the divine presence rather than the knowledge of the content of the divine command. Professor Calhoun appears to give this same interpretation of general revelation when he says that

> In the true height of communion or confrontation, what is likely to be communicated is not some specific instruction for details of conduct, but such an unspoken word as "Fear not, I am with thee," or "Give in, and know that I am God!" Not one's stock of information, but stability of morale, joy of living, or basic direction of will, is primarily affected by the vividly felt presence of one's friend or of one's Maker.[2]

In addition to this felt presence of God, there is for

[2] *God and the Common Life,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1935, p. 245.

the Christian a particular revelation to be found in Christ and his Church. This does not mean that the modern theologian must resolutely turn his back on the results of critical philosophy, science, and the study of history. He is as much a product of these cultural forces as he is of the Christian tradition itself, and his method of apologetics will show the influence of that fact. One of the outstanding weaknesses in the work of those erstwhile liberals who have recently turned conservative is that they have found no way of grounding their appeal to revelation. They seem to alternate between experimentalism and tradition without building the greatly needed bridge between the two. The connection is, I believe, potentially present in our culture, but it needs to be made explicit in order to be used. In passing let it be said that if the cultivation of an attitude which leads to a feeling of the presence of God be admitted as possible and desirable, then the importance of the Christian tradition is already granted. For us who live in the Western world it is impossible to escape the Christian influence in the specifically religious phases of our life. Since Christianity does, as a matter of fact, furnish a good deal of the form and substance of the religious for us, it would seem entirely reasonable if not imperative that we know as much as possible about what the Christian faith is. It is a highly artificial abstraction for any of us to talk about the things of the spirit as though we attribute to them a meaning completely independent of the religion which has produced us.

The contemporary Christian, because he belongs to

the modern world, cannot help sharing some of the outstanding characteristics of that world. Among these is the use of the empirical approach in solving problems. We have tried to show some of the implications and limitations of that approach. But the contemporary Christian is not only modern, he also senses a deep attachment to a historic religion. Apologetics today must indicate how one may be both modern and Christian in this sense and at the same time be an integrated person. There may be some conflict between these factors but there is far less than is ordinarily assumed. A basic principle which will be used is that of pointing to the limitations of knowledge, but this does not mean that we delight in the limitations. We merely recognize them as a fact. Nor do we give faith as such an exalted position or look upon it as a superior order of knowledge. As a Christian, one takes what comes from his religion as superior to other forms of faith, but not as superior to knowledge.

We can apply this principle to many areas of life but it is in the field of ethics where it may be seen most easily. What are the alternatives to the basic Christian ideals of the law of love, the sacredness of personality, and so on? If it were possible to find a completely rational or empirical system of ethics there would be no need of faith or revelation. Indeed, so far as we can use logic and empiricism—and we can to a great extent —revelation is quite superfluous. There is no need for faith where there is knowledge. The rationalists of the seventeeth and eighteenth centuries were sure that a completely demonstrable ethics could be constructed.

Enchanted by the mathematical method, they believed that they could begin with clear and distinct ideas or axioms which are certainly true, and then proceed to make indisputable deductions. This assurance was an important factor in their willingness to dispense with revelation. But the history of modern thought has produced an empiricism which sees the so-called axioms as postulates. The a priori element in thinking always has something of the arbitrary about it, and it can never be proved true within the system to which it applies. To attempt a proof would be to commit the fallacy of begging the question. This arbitrary and undemonstrable factor is present in any system of ethics. The hedonist may assume that people always act from the pleasure motivation, and he will think, therefore, that he has a sure empirical foundation for his ethics. If someone should remind him that a given course of action actually performed by an individual does not appear to have proceeded from the pleasure principle, the hedonist will likely assert that this action really was the means the person chose to get his pleasure. The only way he can show the universality of the pleasure philosophy is that of systematically begging the question. He has not escaped the necessity of including a faith element in his ethical system. Again, if we look upon human personality as more valuable than property, we have a principle from which we can rationally and empirically move toward a conclusion as to what social action ought to be taken in order to make this ideal effective. But if we believe, as did Aristotle, that some human beings have by nature only instru-

mental value in the same sense that property has, we shall come to a different conclusion as to what ought to be done. There is no way of rationally demonstrating the truth of the sacredness of personality or the a priori factor in any ethical view. These are matters of faith, and the Christian takes seriously his religion as supplying this part of what is believed to be the good.

The Christian feels that the best sentiments and ideals which are alive today have their origin in Christianity. So long as these ideals are operative all is well, but they have more power if linked with their vital religious source. An apt illustration of this is furnished by Professor E. W. Lyman's comment on the pragmatic evolutionary philosophy. He says that although Dewey insists upon trying to find his standards in the social evolutionary process itself, it is nevertheless true that "when concrete problems present themselves Dewey actually employs the standards, ultimately derived from Christianity, of the worth of personality, of service to all mankind, and of fellowship and co-operation, and thus distinguishes his combination of Darwinism and voluntarism from that of Nietzsche which exalts an aristocratic will to power to the supreme place." [3]

We need not deny that the process of social evolution generates ethical ideals. It just happens that in the West one of the social forces is the Christian Church, and the Church always has a relationship to its own history as well as to the successive cultural epochs of

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[3] *The Kingdom of God and History,* Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1938, p. 88.

which it is an organic part. The person who takes seriously his membership in the Church will inevitably ask what is the Christian ideal or what is the Christian thing to do in any particular situation. Revelation means in part that God's will is made known more accurately through the historic Christian community than through the contrary ideals which may come to light in the social process. Instead of pretending to find empirically the standards with which to refute the will to power proclaimed by Nietzsche, let us admit that we take these from the religion which claims our loyalty. This view places the Christian revelation primarily in opposition to other ideals taken on faith which compete with it in our own culture. We are not in the least concerned with opposing revelation and knowledge. What is known is known, and cannot be destroyed by revelation which moves in the realm of faith. Nor are we terribly concerned with finding a way to demonstrate that Christianity is the true revelation as against other organized religions found in the world today. Religions are so much a part of the cultures to which they belong that it becomes extremely difficult to abstract them from their contexts sufficiently to make a successful comparison. The foreign mission enterprise, while in many ways a magnificent example of unselfish service, demonstrates the impossibility of carrying to a culture different from our own a pure Christianity divorced from the peculiar Western consciousness and will. In any case, the modern American or European is not often confronted with the live option of choosing either Christianity or Mohammedan-

ism. But he is confronted with the choice between selfishness and unselfishness, between the law of love and the will to power. It is in this kind of choice that God reveals his character to the Christian. Our chief worries about social, economic, or international problems do not spring from conflict among the divergent ideals of the various living religions. They arise rather from the conflict between Christian and secular ideals within our own culture.

II

A religion not only *has* a history, it *is* its history. The socio-historical study of Christianity brings to light valuable interpretations but it is inclined to miss the central importance of the origin in Christ and the abiding values of the tradition. It is useful to see Christianity as a social development, but this can be accomplished from the spectator point of view of one standing outside the movement. There is also the kind of understanding which comes to one who is within the religion and who has a sense of historical continuity. Jung has said:

> Experience shows that many neuroses are caused by the fact that people blind themselves to their own religious promptings because of a childish passion for rational enlightenment. The psychologist of today ought to realize once and for all that we are no longer dealing with questions of dogma and creed. A religious attitude is an element in psychic life whose importance can hardly be

overrated. And it is precisely for the religious outlook that the sense of historical continuity is indispensable.[4]

The historical sense is something which we in America may have to cultivate. America emerged as a nation at a time when a conscious break with the past was being made, but the break was more effective here than in European countries because of our actual experience of witnessing the creation and revision of institutions within a single generation, and because we had no Gothic cathedrals or other physical reminders of our cultural heritage. It is also true that many who came to this land were motivated by the desire to be emancipated from the past that they might be the more free to concentrate their attention on building a future. Although we are still young as a nation we have by this time developed a sense of the "American way" and of the "democratic tradition." Indeed we are inclined frequently to adopt a real though short-sighted attitude toward tradition which leads us to make the false identification of Christianity and democracy. Recent years have made it more apparent that we are so closely related to European nations that we share their past as well as their destiny. Beyond all this the Christian may become aware of a suprapersonal and supranational religio-historical consciousness.

It is possible that the growing importance of historical studies may make a religious contribution. The sharpest break with the past occurred in conjunction with man's reliance upon a method of inquiry which

[4] *Modern Man in Search of a Soul,* tr. by W. S. Dell and Cary F. Baynes, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1933.

was timelessly logical, mathematical, and analytical. But we have recently seen that theories as well as institutions are historically conditioned and that there is an interrelation among the various elements of a culture. Under the influence of the mathematical method, theology tried to rest its case on rationally demonstrable propositions having no necessary relation to the particularity of a religious tradition. The psychological method brought into being the theology of religious experience. It seems evident today that historical theology is destined to assume a place of primary importance. To know and to live the Christian faith is to sense and to feel the revelation of God in Christ and the Christian community.

It is impossible and undesirable, however, to return to the view of revelation held by Protestant orthodoxy. If we assert that the Bible is the Word of God we cannot mean that it is peculiarly lacking in ordinary human fallibility and prejudice. If we assert that Jesus Christ was God Incarnate we cannot mean that there is a complete identification between the historic Jesus and the Christ of the Christian faith. The modern Christian continues to approve that type of historical inquiry which attempts to relate Old Testament history and ideals to whatever else can be discovered concerning the world in which the Jews lived and the problems they faced. Jesus was indeed a product of this development and much of what he had to say was historically conditioned. But if Christianity has any meaning and significance then the figure of Jesus must suggest to us something more than a highly ad-

mirable product of the line of Hebrew prophets. To faith is disclosed the unique revelation of the character of God, the Word made flesh, the Eternal breaking into the temporal. For the believer, Christ must form the center of history, and what is of peculiar historical significance is that which leads up to his coming, and the history of the Church which has been the guardian of his spirit.

There is an analogy between the revelation of God in history and his revelation through nature and value. Nature is experienced in a variety of ways, and experimental knowledge selects one phase for purposes of prediction and control. Religion selects certain experiences through which a dependable and lovable Being is revealed. Value too means several things, but to faith is disclosed the fact of a Being possessing supreme value. History as written is always a highly selective affair. There need be no conflict on the question of historiography between the secular and Christian views, even regarding that which leads to the birth of Christ, the analysis of the life of Christ, or the evaluation of the Church. The study about these, as well as other historical phenomena, must be carried on according to the best principles of inquiry which can be discovered. But for the Christian who lives and acts historically, that which centers in Christ is selected from the wider context as furnishing the basis for divine revelation.

These assumptions have always been present in Christianity. Even the liberal theology continued to find an importance in the Bible, particularly in the

Gospels. The point of view being presented here is liberal in so far as it rejects the literalism of the older attitude toward the Scriptures, but it urges a change of emphasis in the relation between present religious experience and the Christian tradition. Instead of merely seeking support in the Bible and in dogma for our most noble sentiments of today, let us look to revelation as the means through which God speaks. There are two ways in which one's mood may be related to the music he hears. In the first place, one may concentrate his attention on the mood in which he happens to find himself and then seek out the type of music which will satisfactorily coincide with the mood. In the second place, he may have a faith in the great worth of some musical composition and he listens to it in such a way that it becomes forceful in creating a mood. It is the latter attitude toward tradition which must be adopted if Christianity is to make a successful contribution to the salvation of the modern world. This does not necessitate the stilling of our critical faculties. The Christian heritage is capable of being experienced in almost as many ways as is nature, and we are no more sure that we know the real Christianity than that we know the "true" nature. We merely have the faith that God speaks to us through this historic religion and we must employ our energies in the discovery of what is truly Christian just as we work to know and to control the forces of nature.

III

Within the context of the development of mankind

as a whole with which history in general deals, there is the particular continuity having importance for the Christian consciousness. At the center of this is the unique revelation of God in Christ, rendering meaningful that which had gone before and that which followed in time. Thus the Christian tradition has its beginning before the time of Christ in those ideas and events which, as Augustine says, seemed to foreshadow the Incarnation. Among these is the religious awareness of the Jews with which the Old Testament deals, and that is one reason why this literature is considered sacred. The study of the Hebrew people can be made from a non-Christian point of view, and the results of such a study could be quite as valid with reference to the standards employed as the results of a scholarly study from the Christian standpoint. The latter sees in the Old Testament some things of crucial importance, although other interpretations may plausibly be given.

The Christian believes that the Jews had a spiritual and historical mission to fulfill which is universally significant. To the Jews God was revealed as a being who acts in time and whose will is directly related to the historic process. This was an advance upon the idea of purely tribal or national gods, and also a corrective of the one-sided Greek philosophical conception of the eternal and changeless Absolute who transcends time. One does not need to make the spiritual leap out of the changing world in order to feel the presence of God. Change and process in themselves are not evil; they are fraught with profound religious meaning.

God's activity was operative in events of the past and will continue to influence history in the future. The evil to be transcended is not mere change; the evils to be avoided are injustice and that kind of preoccupation with the immediate which breeds forgetfulness of the spiritual foundation of history. The Jews had a passionate devotion to a God of justice and to the ideal of an absolutely just social order on earth. This is found time and again in the prophetic writings and it furnishes a basis for their interpretation of history and for their expectation. They constantly remind the people that God brought them out of Egypt, that he demands justice in the present, that he will guide them in the future and ultimately bring about deliverance from evil.

Coupled with the passion for justice and the desire to be loyal to a God acting in history were two other factors of equal importance. In the first place, the relation between God and man was primarily a relation between God and the group taken as a whole, rather than between God and the individual. The salvation expected was one which was to occur at a point in history and which applied to the Jews as a people. The importance of the individual in later Christian faith came largely from Greek philosophy and Hellenistic culture. In the second place, the hope for an order of justice took the form in Jewish thought of a Messianic age in which the evils of the world would be destroyed and a kingdom of righteousness inaugurated. There were, as we know, several conceptions of the type of Messiah who would bring this

about, but the Messianic hope was central in the Jewish consciousness. The political implications of the kingdom idea are a part of this hope, but it is never merely a secular kingdom which is expected; there is always the theocratic notion. Sometimes the awareness of their special divine mission led the Jews to anticipate the coming age as a time when they, as God's chosen people, would be exalted above the other nations of the earth. They also thought of their mission as that of becoming a suffering servant of God and producing a Messiah as the Savior of the world. It is the latter view of the significance of the Hebrew development which is usually found in Christian thought. The Jews produced Jesus the Christ, and in this one individual their world historical mission was fulfilled.

This interpretation has the merit not only of substantiating the Christian faith but also of throwing some light on the present "Jewish problem." Outbreaks of violent anti-Semitism are among the undisputed facts of the history of the West, and the present wave of cruel persecution has become one of the most serious problems we have to face. There has always been the naïve and rather insensitive acceptance by orthodox Christians of the Jewish plight as just punishment for failing to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah. It is a mystery, however, how we who have pledged our allegiance to the God of love can justify hatred and barbaric cruelty toward any race of people. And yet a purely secular reading of this history is bound to remain superficial as compared with the Christian view. The latter alone reveals how tragically

profound is the anomalous situation in which the Jews find themselves.

All attempts to explain anti-Semitism point to peculiar characteristics of the Jews which are exceedingly annoying to gentiles, although it has been difficult to state precisely what those characteristics are. The Jews are accused of clanishness, of remaining a people apart so that they refuse to be absorbed by the various nations where they live, of leading in revolutionary social movements, and so on. Without reference to the centrality of the religious factor none of these things can be understood. Flowing through the veins of the contemporary Jew is the blood of a race which had a singularly important mission to fulfill. The reality of a people chosen by God is still felt even though the consummation of the mission and the reason for which the Jews were chosen lie in the one supreme historical fact of Jesus Christ. Thus from one point of view the world no longer needs the Jew and it looks upon his continued presence as an annoying fact. This is particularly the case when we realize that the same passion for justice, the same faith in God, the same hope for the salvation of the race, which in the past led this people to make its universally meaningful contribution, are still moving forces in contemporary Jewry. Without the intensity of the religious feeling which the Jews had in the past they could not have performed God's will, and because that feeling was so intense it is natural that it should have lasted through the centuries. Although the Jew is in fact the object of hatred, he ought to be the object of deep gratitude.

Christians cannot possibly justify the notion that God wishes to use them as the means of cruelly punishing the very people who have carried out a divine purpose.

According to the religious interpretation of history the clannishness of the Jews is the most natural thing imaginable. The relation between God and man is for them a relation between God and the people. The spiritual significance of the individual, therefore, is greatly diminished whenever he is separated from the group. To be the chosen people does not mean to be a series of separate individuals. The racial consciousness is much more real than the subjective individual consciousness. It is also clear why there is disagreement among the Jews themselves on the issue of Zionism. The hope of an ideal earthly kingdom has always had political implications, and some Jews still long for and expect salvation in the setting up of a righteous kingdom on the land which so long ago was "promised" them. But they fail to realize that the hope is one which cannot be fulfilled in the normal historical process, that the kingdom is ultimately a religious rather than a political ideal. For this reason other Jews know full well that Zionism is not the answer to their problem.

Whether or not the Jews have been outstanding in furnishing the leadership in revolutionary social movements is debatable. Much has been said on both sides of this question. It is also impossible to know with certainty how much of Karl Marx's point of view was influenced by his Jewish ancestry. Whatever the facts may be, it would not be surprising if we should find

some connection. The overwhelming desire for justice which is portrayed in the Old Testament has much in common with the prophetic and eschatological elements in communist literature. There is in the latter the same prophecy of the impending downfall of the wicked social order in which we live (although dialectical materialism is substituted for a moral God acting in history), and there is the same hope for an era of justice which is to be erected after the kingdoms of the world (the bourgeoisie) have been destroyed.

So far as the Old Testament ideal of social justice has become a part of the Christian faith, there is also a Christian tendency toward socialism. The social gospel was for a time associated so closely with democratic ideals and the idea of progress that our hope was placed in a gradual coming of the Kingdom of God. It was the reawakening of the religious eschatological idea, in addition to the influence exerted by Marx's penetrating analysis of capitalist culture, which has made the social gospel more radical in character. However, Christianity does not identify salvation or the ideal Kingdom with an earthly order, and therefore is not surprised at the disappointments to be found in the historic attempts to apply the communist principle. At the same time, whenever Christianity emphasizes other-worldly salvation to the exclusion of the attempt to build an earthly society approximating as much as possible the ideals of the Kingdom, it is untrue to its own genius. The Russian communists were partially justified in condemning religion for being less concerned with justice than with anesthetizing the masses

in such a way as to permit the continuation of exploitation. They were wrong, however, in failing to realize the service religion can render when its historic passion for justice is made effective.

Jewish history is important both because it foreshadowed the revelation of God in Christ and because its more important religious and ethical ideas are a permanent part of the Christian faith. Since Jews and Christians both stand for humane ideals against the methods of violence and power, they may expect similar treatment in the modern world. Van Paassen[5] may be highly speculative in his discussion of the contemporary Palestinian situation, but he gives an interesting and not altogether improbable interpretation of the reason for the intensity of anti-Semitism today. He says that when men try to give a moral justification of the will to power and military might, they have the psychological necessity of destroying that which stands as a conscience for society. Since the Jews have become the symbol of nonagression and righteousness, they must be put out of the way in order that unholy procedures may be made easier to execute.

Although the Old Testament is the only pre-Christian literature which is considered sacred, there are other ideas and movements antedating the birth of Christ which anticipate the Christian era. Thus Whitehead asks the very pertinent question: "Can there be any doubt that the power of Christianity lies in its revelation in act, of that which Plato divined in

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[5] In *Days of Our Years,* 2d. ed., Dial Press, New York, 1940.

theory?" [6] Behind this question are the idea of the religiously influential discovery by Plato that "the divine element in the world is to be conceived as a persuasive agency and not as a coercive agency," [7] and the interpretation of the essence of Christianity as "the appeal to the life of Christ as a revelation of the nature of God and of his agency in the world." [8] The essential features of Plato's cosmology were destined to become a part of the Christian faith. In the years immediately preceding the birth of Christ the development of Platonism along religious lines had become highly influential. There was the vision of an absolute and completely spiritual Good which stood in contrast to the evil and changing world of ordinary experience. Plato had talked about a cosmic creative Soul or Mind who, having a perfect knowledge of the Good, desired to bring all things to the highest possible degree of perfection. There can be little doubt that many of the characteristics which Plato assigned to his creative God were also assigned later to the concept of the Logos, a concept widely held before the coming of Christ. It referred to that divine principle which bridges the gap between the world and the Absolute. Greek and Hebrew developments were somewhat merged even before the dawn of the Christian era. The Jewish idea of God's Wisdom was seen to have a relation to the Logos, and some Hellenistic Jews of whom Philo is the best known tried to reinterpret the

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[6] *Adventures of Ideas,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1933, p. 214.

[7] *Ibid.,* p. 213.

[8] *Ibid.,* p. 214.

Old Testament in terms of Greek philosophical conceptions. The world was thus ready for the revelation of God in Christ as both the Messiah and the Logos, the eternal Word made flesh. Christ was the answer both to the historical hope and to the philosophical quest, and yet the crucified Christ remained a stumbling-block to many Jews and foolishness to many Greeks.

The world at the time of Jesus' birth was uniquely prepared for a Savior having universal appeal. For years there had been the interchange of ideas between the East and the West until all religions and philosophies were syncretistic in character. The extensive political control exerted by the Roman Empire also helped to further the movement toward a world culture. Several factors in this development were important in laying the foundation for the Christian revelation. For one thing, there was the emergence of a distinct concept of the reality of the individual. The Greek city state had lost its autonomy and the Greek citizens were compelled to think of themselves as entities having an existence independent of a small political unit. If life was to have meaning for them at all it had to refer to something beyond the confines of the city state. Man was more than a part of a finite social group, he was also an individual making his way in a world community. Likewise the barriers between ancient oriental nations were made less rigid by the universalism of the Roman world. Greek religion had been incurably attached to particular localities and the Eastern religions had been nationalistic. But in the

years immediately preceding the birth of Christ the concept of individual personality attained a clarity never before equaled in history. The salvation which men demanded was not merely a racial, national, or group salvation; it was something applicable to individuals regardless of race. Christ fulfilled this requirement.

The counterpart of individualism was the idea of a world-wide community. When the ties of local city or nation were loosened, men felt the need of an idealized and inclusive social unit to take the place of the smaller ones. They therefore deified the Roman state and worshiped at the shrines of emperors in order to satisfy their emotional craving for unity. The popularity of Stoicism during this period was due largely to its teaching about the World City which is more real than finite political states, and the notion that there is a universal human brotherhood which is more fundamental than national loyalties. All of this paved the way for the revelation of God in Christ and the Christian conception of the Kingdom of God. Christ became the fulfillment also of the expectation found in Gnosticism, of the demand for a redeemer which the Mystery-religions had tried to satisfy, as well as of the philosophical quest for the divine Logos and of the Old Testament prophecy concerning a Messiah.

IV

Christian doctrine at a very early date insisted that Christ was fully God and fully man. The central item of faith demanded the complete union of the human

and the divine, a moment in time when the real meaning of the eternal was revealed. Any attempt to formulate a theory which detracted either from Christ's humanity or from his deity was eventually rejected. This doctrine is indeed paradoxical and it has led to extremely subtle theological controversies concerning the two natures and the manner of their union. Many of these older controversies were based upon philosophical and scientific presuppositions which have little meaning today, but the assertion that God and man became one in Christ is a permanent affirmation of the Christian faith. The distinction for us is that between the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith.

Liberal theology has emphasized the humanity of Jesus. From this point of view Jesus is a person whose historicity is to be examined according to the same procedures which are employed in all competent historical investigation. The documents which tell about his life must be subjected to the most thorough possible criticism. The purpose of such a study is to know the kind of man Jesus was, the social and environmental factors which produced him, the setting in which he lived and taught. Jesus was a man, fully man, sharing the hopes, ideas, and many of the limitations of his Palestinian friends. As a human being he was historically conditioned just as all men are. Quite apart from any Christological theory, the historic Jesus is an appealing figure. What he was and what he taught have value in and of themselves. It is a great contribution of modern critical scholarship to have recovered for us the man and the teacher about whom the

gospel is written. Walter Lippmann has said that "because the teaching of the sages was incomprehensible, the multitude, impressed but also bewildered, ignored them as teachers and worshiped them as gods." [9] Jesus as sage and teacher is too valuable to be ignored.

The liberal and humanistic view of Jesus is thus in accord with one part of early doctrine, but this view can hardly be made the sole foundation for the Christian faith because in spite of its admitted values it inevitably runs into difficulties. Historical knowledge moves in the realm of probabilities, and in the case of Jesus there is a paucity of documents upon which to reconstruct his life with any assurance of accuracy. The Gospels were the product of the early Church and thus presented a series of biographies which had theological overtones. Jesus was already thought of as both God and man, and while it is useful to disentangle the purely human and historical elements so far as that is possible, the result can never escape uncertainty. And after we have created our picture of the historic Jesus, what does this mean for us? If we acknowledge him master of our lives we may run into that dangerous type of bibliolotry in which every alleged teaching of the Gospels is looked upon as divine command. But all these teachings, even the "authentic" ones, are historically conditioned and unless they are violently abstracted from their context they may not be universally applicable. A good deal of New Testament scholarship has emphasized the eschatological element in Je-

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[9] *A Preface to Morals,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1929, p. 200.

sus' teaching and hence points to its lack of realism and to its reference to a particular type of Jewish ideology. The appeal to the Jesus of history without the added assumption that God revealed himself in this historical figure may very well end in dismissing Jesus as a visionary fool; or, if the eschatological element is not emphasized, Jesus may be looked upon as merely one of the more interesting wise men of the past.

In addition to the value of the gospel teachings, the Christian discovers in the character and quality of Jesus' life the revelation of the nature of God. The Christ of faith is not merely the object of historical inquiry, he is primarily the object of specifically Christian experience in which is revealed the ultimate meaning of life and history. There is no logical argument nor historical research which can establish the fact that Christ is fully God. Man's religious consciousness leads him to the faith in an unconditioned meaning and value which underlies all empirical meanings and values. Our ideas as to what the nature of the ultimate or unconditioned may be are not subject to exact verification. But let us not forget that in all probability we shall attribute to something or other the quality of giving life its significance. The Christian is gripped by the quality of character revealed to him in Christ, and all he can do by way of persuasion is to present this picture to be compared with the ideal of imperialism or economic strife or whatever it may be which competes with Christ as the object of complete devotion. This has always been the essence of preaching.

Man does not arrive at the Christian faith as the final step in a human thought process. Rather, he discovers that the faith has taken possession of him.

Liberal theology has sometimes tried to demonstrate that Christ was divine by bringing together two lines of argument. First, it has pursued the philosophical route to a supposed knowledge of the character of God. Second, it has followed historical research to the knowledge of the historic Jesus. Then it has tried to show that the character of God as disclosed by philosophy is the same as the character of Jesus as disclosed by historical inquiry. Therefore God was in Jesus. But this misses the point of what it means to be a Christian. If we could know the character of God independently of Christian faith we should not be in need of revelation. What we believe to be the character or will of God is what we find revealed to us in Christ.

It is typical of the liberal view that Jesus is pictured solely as the good man, the example of an ideal toward which it is desirable to strive. This has obvious religious values and may be sufficient so long as we remain content with the finite and have no concern with the ultimate which transcends time. Tillich gives an interesting illustration of this in the field of painting. Although naturalistic painting made use of the traditional religious symbols, "the manner of representation was clearly analogous to the liberal conception of Jesus which prevailed in the Protestant theology of the period, so that at beast an ideal, finite reality but never a reference to the eternal was expressed. The religious art of capitalist society reduces

the traditional religious symbols to the level of middle-class morality and robs them of their transcendence and their sacramental character." [10] On the other hand, the human quest for the transcendent is found in the mystical and religious quality of expressionistic art. Yet expressionism does not derive its inspiration from the symbols of Christianity because the continuity of the religious tradition has been broken. In order to feel once again that we are organic parts of a vital tradition we must recover the essence of the doctrine that Christ is fully God as well as fully man.

As an example of the quality of life and the type of character which we should try to achieve, Jesus is a moral and religious force. But he is also much more than this for the Christian consciousness. Man lives in time, he is the victim of his own pride and selfishness, of conflict within his soul and in society. His highest moral insights condemn selfishness and hatred and conflict, and he searches for love, order, and the eternal significance of his being. This duality between the ideal and the actual, this tragic bondage to what is evil or only relatively good when imagination presents the possibility of absolute good, is what is meant by the estrangement of man from God. Christ is the symbol of God's mercy in identifying himself completely with the human at a particular point in the historic process, thus bridging the gap between the eternal and the temporal. In addition to following Jesus as our ideal, Christian salvation in its deepest form means

[10] *The Religious Situation,* Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1932, pp. 56-57.

identifying ourselves with the God-Man so that we become one with God.

V

Although the center of the Christian revelation is the historic figure of Christ, we have discovered that the pre-Christian Hebrew development, Greek philosophy, and Hellenistic culture were significant because of their preparation for the coming of the Son of God. It is also true that revelation did not end with Christ but continued in the Christian community under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The very concepts of the meaning of the Incarnation and of salvation were in part the creation of the early Church, and the formulation of dogma has been a continuous process. Although the Church is that institution which has been the guardian of the spirit of Christ through the years and which gives a continuity of the Christian tradition, we should not suppose that every contemporary social group called a church is a worthy witness to Christian principles, or that the Holy Spirit is never in the midst of a group which is outside organized religion. Clericalism may itself be an actual barrier to making effective the highest ideals of faith, while movements having no ecclesiastical connection are frequently close to the Christian spirit. The vitality of what is central in tradition has many times been preserved by groups breaking away from the rigidities of ecclesiastical organization. This discrepancy has led to making a distinction between the invisible Church Universal and the visible historic churches, between the mystical body

of Christ and human institutions, between the elect and congregations.

The difficulty in forming a satisfactory ecclesiastical theory is that so far as we can analyze the situation we see the Church as composed of human beings and administered by human beings. Men are still merely men and are just as capable of making mistakes when they act as members of the Christian Church as when they act in any other capacity. And yet the Christian has a faith in a special revelation in Christ which continues in the Church. Thus he believes that the Church is not merely a human institution, but that it was founded by God and is headed by Christ. The question arises as to where we can find a point of contact between those visible churches which are open to historical or sociological investigation, and the transcendental Church Universal which is believed on faith to be truly divine. If the Church possesses the quality of holiness apart from those who constitute its membership, it must have some characteristics which transcend human limitations. Catholicism has tried to solve this problem by making a distinction between the office of administering church affairs and the human being who fills the office. It is the former which comes from God and stands in a direct line from Christ down to the present day. Thus when the human head of the Church speaks in his official capacity it is not a case of an individual offering his personal opinion. His is merely the human voice through which the holy office makes known the will of God. The difficulty with this theory is that the possibility of human error is still

present. When one is made to feel the responsibility of holding a consecrated position he undoubtedly goes through the experience of eliminating so far as possible his personal desires in order that he may be free to do what is considered the will of God. Valuable as this is psychologically, it can never furnish the content of knowledge nor provide a criterion for judging between truth and error. No matter how holy the office is, it is still a fallible human being who occupies it, and Catholic doctrine necessarily leads to the occasional elevation of human error to the status of divine truth. The efficacy of the sacraments is also looked upon as the gift of God independent of the person who administers them. This theory has some values but leads to undesirable consequences when divine grace is identified with certain more or less magical operations through which the believer is given a mysterious security regardless of the quality of the life he may lead.

At the other extreme from Catholicism is the sect type of Christian community which finds the holiness of the Church to depend on the distinctly Christian quality of life exemplified by the members. A number of individuals who have been sanctified by the experience of Christ in their lives band together for mutual support and thus constitute the Church. The latter is not a metaphysical reality but the name of a group of individuals who share in belief and purity of life. This reflects the nominalism and individualism of the modern world but is an unsatisfactory theory both sociologically and theologically. That the individual is a product of the social institutions to which he belongs

can no more be doubted than that the institutions are largely dependent upon the persons who compose them. Modern physics proceeded for a time on the assumption that it could solve its problems by studying the relations between independent masses, and that the nature of the masses was not altered when they entered into different types of relation. But later the concept of the "field" became increasingly important, and the field was seen to have laws and properties of its own. It could not be explained solely in terms of individual particles; rather, the particles themselves are to some extent determined by the nature of the field in which they are found. A parallel development has occurred in social theory, and analyses similar to that made by Marx have demonstrated how much one's ideas, modes of behavior, and ethical ideals are determined by the social groups which have produced him. The Church, then, is not merely a collection of individuals. As a social institution it possesses characteristics which are operative in producing Christian men and women. From the theological standpoint it is assumed that an elevating and saving power comes from Christ, and that this is made available to successive generations by the continuity of the Church. Thus in a very genuine way the Church is prior to the individuals of any period of history, and it exerts an influence in making them what they are. Religious worship is more than the sum of the noble aspirations of the persons who gather together. It is the collective seeking of God as specially revealed in the life represented by Jesus. In genuine worship something is

added to what the worshipers bring with them, namely, the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The visible Church has a natural history analagous to that of any social institution, but the ideal Church Universal is present in the historic process whenever a social group conscientiously seeks to find the will of God, when it turns primarily to the Christian tradition as revealing the divine will, and when it is guided by the spirit of Christ. When we say that the Church is divine in so far as it is controlled by the Christian revelation, we are confronted with another phase of the problem of distinguishing between the human and the God-given factors. Although we believe that God's will can be known through the Christian faith, it is the human mind which is employed in determining the genuine and spurious in what goes under the name of faith. It is the Christ of Christian experience who is God, while the historic Jesus was a man. The Bible was written by men, the interpreters of Christian truth in successive periods of history were men, and we who try to be worthy of the tradition in which we stand have human limitations. There is no certainty to be found, and both Catholicism and Protestant orthodoxy have done a great deal of harm by failing to recognize that fact.

In taking the Bible literally and in detail as the final revelation, orthodoxy included in the divine truth barbaric ideas of moral practice and crude cosmological speculation. Even those parts of the Bible whose value has survived were made less effective by seeing them only in the particular context of the bib-

lical world. In this way the relevance of religion to the problems of the modern world was lessened and the energy of Christendom dissipated in the conflict between "fundamentalism" and "modernism." The Bible is a human product even though it may be used as a means to faith. It is not a body of clearly stated principles which enables us to distinguish what is Christian from what is not Christian.

There is greater wisdom in the point of view of Catholicism where the Church itself is made the final authority in the interpretation of faith. The Church lives in history and is a part of the various social situations to which it attempts to apply the principles of Christianity. It therefore can meet the needs of the changing world with authority and is not handicapped by the presupposition of Protestant orthodoxy that the truth is confined to the setting of the Hebrew and Hellenistic worlds. We have already pointed out, however, that it is human beings who occupy positions of ecclesiastical authority, and no matter how learned or conscientious they may be they are still liable to error. Their errors as well as their true insights may become equated with the final statement of the meaning of the Christian faith. Furthermore, Catholicism had its greatest power and influence during the medieval period and was an integral part of feudal society. The disintegration of feudalism and the rise of Protestantism were parts of the same historical movement, and it is impossible for contemporary Catholicism to avoid looking back to the thirteenth century as the finest example of Christian civilization. This is rein-

forced by the fact that scholasticism reached its peak in the same century and is still thought of as giving the truest interpretation of the Christian tradition. Thus, in spite of the advantages of placing authority in the developing Church, it is a particular period in history and a particular social situation which are appealed to as offering the highest revelation.

The formulation of Christian doctrine is both social and continuous. Doctrine may be partially comprehended by one who is outside the religious community because it necessarily has something in common with that widely shared experience to which philosophy in general refers. The fuller understanding of Christian teaching is limited to the group which looks at the world from the point of view of Christian experience. If this group is truly the Church it has a common basis in the fact that God through Christ has elicited an absolute commitment. It is this fundamental experience which gives point to the intellectual task of putting the faith into conceptual form. The task is social since it has to do with the shared experience of the Christian community. It is also continuous. There are, to be sure, high points in the development. Since the center of Christian tradition is the revelation of God in Christ, the Gospels occupy a particularly important place. The brilliant formulation of doctrine during those vital years at the beginning of the Christian era is also a high point. The Church has rightly assigned to the teaching of the Fathers as well as to the Bible a position of special significance in Christian tradition. But there is no final-

ity here any more than in the admittedly illuminating work of Thomas Aquinas or of Calvin and Luther. Such peaks must not blind us to the fact of continuity, to the fact that we today are not only the bearers but the makers of tradition. We are the heirs of a historic development and we are also the creators of history. When loyalty to a faith is seen in this light of continuous development there is no fundamental opposition between experimentalism and tradition.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE SPIRIT OF MODERNISM

THERE ARE MANY WHO FEEL THAT THIS RETURN TO revelation is really a return to unreason and therefore represents a dangerous tendency. They still believe that religion can be based exclusively on human reason and human experience. It may be well to examine a little further the nature and validity of this belief.

I

Among the conscious revolts against tradition we may take the rationalism of the eighteenth century as our point of departure. In spite of the fact that the enlightenment produced some excellent historians it has been said frequently that this period was unhistorical. Several things are meant by such a characterization. For one thing, the followers of Hegel thought of history as supplying the real clue to the understanding of religion and other areas of culture. The historical method was looked upon as replacing all other methods, such as those of analysis and generalization. By comparison, the eighteenth century appeared unhistorical. Also the revolutionary aspect

of this period created a hostility toward the past because so much of that past was an evil barrier to the process of reform. It was this age, too, which gave birth to the idea of progress with the suggestion that although the past may have made its contribution, it is nevertheless something away from which we are moving and not an object of reverence. Berdyaev describes the enlightenment as

> That age in the history of every people when the self-confident human reason rears itself above the mysteries of being and life, above those divine mysteries which are the source of all human life and culture. In such an age the human reason places itself outside and above these immediate mysteries of universal creation and history. It follows inevitably that man ceases to participate directly in the "historical." The age of enlightenment denies the mystery of the "historical." It denies the "historical" all specific reality and contact with the human spirit and the human reason.[1]

To be unhistorical religiously is not necessarily to lack interest in the history of religion in general or of Christianity in particular. It is rather a lack of what Santayana calls "piety" which, as he says, "drinks at the deep, elemental sources of power and order: it honours the past, appropriates and transmits its mission." [2]

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[1] N. Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936, pp. 6-7.

[2] G. Santayana, *Reason in Religion*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905, p. 276.

Rationalistic theology was quite as unhistorical as the age which produced it. The Catholic Church, as the guardian of Christian tradition, had maintained its hold on men partly because of the doctrines of man and salvation upon which rested the importance of the sacramental system. These included the notions of original sin, the need of supernatural aid in bringing about salvation, and a supernatural realm in which alone human happiness could be attained. Each of these notions was criticized by the philosophers of the enlightenment. John Locke, in his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding,* argued that the mind at birth is like a sheet of blank paper upon which, in the course of experience, is written whatever comes from the outer world. The entire furnishings of the mind are provided by experience and there are no innate ideas whatever. This suggests the notion that man is born without innate predispositions either. *Original* sin is therefore meaningless. The original moral condition of man is that of neutrality, but his ideas and his conduct may be developed into correctness and goodness if he is exposed to the right sort of environment. There is no need for supernatural aid because the "natural faculties" of men are capable of bringing "their ideas and their conduct, and hence the institutions by which they live, into harmony with the universal order." [3] The sole purpose of religion was considered that of stimulating ethical activity, and the test of religion's worth lay in whether or not it made its

[3] C. L. Becker, *The Heavenly City of the Eighteenth Century Philosophers,* Yale Univ. Press, 1932, p. 65.

adherents good citizens. The unbounded faith in human reason made revelation either secondary or completely irrelevant. These are some of the factors which made the religion of reason antihistorical.

Rationalistic method in theology reflected what was thought to be the method of science. Since the time of Galileo observation and experimentation had, of course, been important features of the procedures actually employed by scientists, but the influence of Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz had emphasized the mathematical or rationalistic phase of scientific method. Thus scientific knowledge appeared to be a great deductive system of propositions which truly described the harmonious world machine. Theology, too, was made to consist of a system of propositions the truth of which was to be tested by human reason. God was the first cause of the universe whose existence could be demonstrated by the cosmological argument. All important religious truths could be understood and demonstrated in such a way that any reasonable man would accept them.

Much of the temper of the eighteenth century became a part of later liberal theology: the emphasis on satisfactions in this life rather than in a supernatural realm, the optimistic view of human nature, and the unwillingness to defend more of the Christian revelation than appears reasonable. But the constructive program of rationalism hardly survived the century which produced it, and this for two reasons. In the first place, the theological propositions were too far removed from the sort of thing men and women asso-

ciate with religion. The God of religion is always an object of reverence who, at least occasionally, is felt to be near enough to help, inspire, reprove, and comfort one in his life's journey. The definition of God which the philosopher or the theologian formulates must have at least a remotely recognizable connection with the God of religious experience if it is to be satisfactory. Religion is incurably attached to the heart, but the eighteenth-century theologians were highly opposed to any sort of emotionalism. Orthodoxy, therefore, survived, and there was a movement toward evangelicalism in which religious warmth and enthusiasm were given an outlet.

But, in the second place, there was also a profound theoretical basis for abandoning, or seriously modifying, the rationalistic method. The empiricism implicit in John Locke was carried to its logical conclusion by David Hume. When used in the examination of the meaning of scientific knowledge this empiricism brought about a radical alteration in the meaning of causality and of natural law. Formerly the objective world was looked upon as a network of cause and effect relationships. The laws of science stated the behavior which nature necessarily follows and which formed the basis of making absolutely accurate predictions. But Hume pointed out that empirically the cause and effect relationship reduces to psychological habit; that is, in the experience of the observer two events occur in conjunction so regularly that they become firmly associated in his thinking. Whenever, therefore, he sees one of these events he expects the other to follow.

Likewise, natural law is not a necessary relationship in the objective world; it is the summary of observed regularities in the experience of the observer.

This shift in the conception of the nature of scientific knowledge was accompanied by a corresponding shift in the field of religious knowledge. Hume's theory of causality made the cosmological argument untenable because we never have experiences of worlds coming into being and this one universe we do know a little about is not necessarily the effect of a cause, and even if we were to postulate a cause there is no logical reason for believing it would have any similarity to the God of religion. The method of rationalistic theology seemed plausible so long as it mirrored the nature of scientific method. When the latter was radically changed it meant that the structure of the religion of reason was undermined. On the other hand, if scientific concepts were to be redefined in terms of the experience of the observer, there was no reason why religious concepts could not be redefined in the same way. Salvation and God could be defined as processes which actually take place in some area of human experience.

II

Schleiermacher is, with justification, usually given credit for starting theology on this path. He defined religion, not as a rationalistic set of propositions, but as the *feeling* of absolute dependence. This centered attention on the factors of the religious consciousness and thus inaugurated the method so useful to liberal-

ism, the theology of religious experience. Here is a point of view which would be inclined to neglect tradition and to lead directly to experimentalism. The point of departure for the theology of religious experience is not historic fact but the occurrences in one area of the consciousness of religious persons. The validity of theological concepts would rest upon their consequences rather than upon reference to a norm furnished by historic Christianity. However, liberal theology has not been a consistent and articulate philosophy. In addition to being influenced by Schleiermacher it has shown some tendency toward Hegelian idealism and toward the method of Ritschl. Ritschl was opposed to both the speculative idealism of Hegel and the subjectivism which Schleiermacher represented. He found the starting point of theology neither in the religious consciousness nor in reason, but in the eternally valuable essence of historic Christianity. As a matter of fact, liberalism has never made a bold rejection of tradition, and this is probably due to practical issues even more than to considerations of theological method.

We have been discussing the rise of liberal theology out of the background of eighteenth-century rationalism and the criticism this received at the hands of Hume. But it is equally important to see liberalism in relation to nineteenth-century science and to Protestant Fundamentalism. Vital religion depends upon certain very delicate adjustments. It has its body of doctrine in which are contained the ideas and beliefs which give it significance. As cultural changes occur

it is necessary to restate these doctrines in different terminology and to make different emphases. There is the task of seeing what is eternal and what is temporal in the historic faith. There is always the danger that in any given period of history religion may make the error of clinging to conceptual forms which once had meaning but which definitely belonged to a culture which has perished; or it may make the equally serious error of so radically changing the conceptual forms to meet the contemporary mood that even the essence of the doctrines is lost. Such is the problem which liberalism has been facing. Fundamentalism tried to defend the whole literal content of Christian revelation, that is, the Bible in its entirety and those doctrines which had been crystallized in Protestant orthodoxy. Much of this could be defended, of course, only by flatly denying certain very central features of the scientific outlook which were widely accepted in the modern world. Among these were the *evolutionary theory,* which seemed to undercut such notions as special creation, the Original Garden of Eden, and the Fall of the First Man; *historicism,* which gave a naturalistic account of the origin of Christianity, emphasizing its social background and its early development in relation to the cultural forces of the environment in which it grew; *biblical criticism,* which interpreted the Bible in such a way as to make untenable the notion that it is the infallible word of God in all its details.

In relation to science the task of liberalism has been to show that the "essence" of Christianity does not run

counter to scientific fact. Negatively, this has given the impression of using the method of making a series of strategic retreats. Whatever content of historic Christianity is contradicted by modern science is given up, and the surrender is justified by arguing that the really important part of the faith remains. Positively, it has rendered the very necessary task of making Christianity acceptable to the modern mind. Effective religion must have a genuinely organic relation to the culture of which it is a part, and liberalism quite correctly saw that the gulf between modern culture and Fundamentalism was becoming impossibly wide.

As against Fundamentalism, the liberal method was interested in preserving only the permanently valuable essence of Christianity, and this would exclude much of the content of orthodoxy. Professor D. C. Macintosh states the position as follows:

> As the essence of certain material substances is that in them which it has been found essential to extract and preserve for certain common human purposes, so the essence of any historic religion is that within it which it is essential to retain for truly valid human purposes, provided always that it can be retained when everything has been given up which for good and sufficient reasons must be given up. With this proviso the essence of anything is the highest common factor, the greatest common measure of the ideal and the actual. The essence of Christianity is that in actual historical traditional Christianity which it is essential to retain if the universally valid ideal for humanity is to be realized as soon as possible—provided, of

course, that it can be retained after all that must be gotten rid of (superstition, for instance) has been eliminated.[4]

The situation, then, which liberalism was trying to meet was one in which orthodoxy and the modern outlook were so widely separated that many people seemed to be facing the necessity of choosing between them. To those who chose the modern and scientific outlook liberalism said, "You can remain modern and still be a Christian." To the Fundamentalist it said, "You can remain a Christian and still accept science."

I have rehearsed this familiar story in order to make clear that both a respect for tradition and a tendency toward experimentalism have been parts of liberal theology. Although from one point of view incompatible they could live together in something like harmony so long as the main job was that of steering a course between Fundamentalism and modern science. These two interests are revealed in the ways liberalism rests its case on religious experience. As regards tradition, for example, the historic doctrines are interpreted in terms of the vital experiences out of which they arose. A part of such experiences arose solely because it belonged to a definite historic situation and cannot, therefore, be repeated. Another part is more universal in nature and can be recognized as having a kinship with our own religious consciousness. In this way we may interpret the deity of Christ. That the Jewish Christians interpreted his deity in terms of the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy, that those acquainted with the

[4] D. C. Macintosh, *The Reasonableness of Christianity,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1925, p. 13.

Mystery-religions thought of him as a Mystery-god, and that the philosophers interpreted him as the Logos, reflect the historical thought forms of the early years of Christianity. But that all of them deified Christ shows that there was something common to them all; namely, meditation upon the life, work, and teachings of Jesus produced in them a feeling that they were in the presence of God. Now this is an experience which may be shared also by the contemporary Christian, and so it reveals the permanently valid meaning of the doctrine of the deity of Christ. The value of the historic faith remains even though we give up such things as belief in the virgin birth.

This procedure is very useful and the theologian who employs it is undisturbed until it dawns upon him that he is frequently shifting his norm from tradition to experience and from experience to tradition. The fact that he is concerned about defending a particular historic doctrine indicates that tradition is the norm for valid religious experience. On the other hand, when he retains one doctrine and eliminates another he does so on the basis of contemporary religious experience. That is, modern experience is found to be such that it supports one doctrine while it shows another to be irrelevant. But if the final court of appeal is the experience of religious people, why spend so much energy trying to justify the older doctrines? Is it not because of a faith that the presence of historic Christianity is, after all, the true norm? Thus we are caught in the circle of judging tradition by experience and experience by tradition.

This dilemma is only partially solved by the Ritschlian emphasis on the historic Jesus. Ritschl believed that theology should start "from the 'Gospel' given in Jesus Christ. What Dogmatic is called to do is not to describe or elucidate the existing state of the Christian mind; its proper task, rather, is to bring out and expound with all possible completeness the *norm* to which Christian piety must conform; for in revelation God makes insistent *claims* on man." [5] Such a norm could be made the basis not only of judging whether or not an experience is truly religious, but also of determining the value of this or that doctrine which had developed in the course of Christian history. But, as Professor Ferm has pointed out, even the

Ritschlian appeal to Christ and an alleged Christian revelation as an impregnable rock upon which to construct and shape a theology was headed in two opposing directions: back towards an historic norm and forward towards a normative type of mystical experience. In the one case the Ritschlian way led back to the researches of the historic critic, to a properly attested historic fact, the historic Jesus, as the basis; in the other, the way led, in spite of the Ritschlian protests, to mysticism of the clearest type, an alleged spiritual *rapport* of the individual with the alleged inner life-quality of Jesus, the Founder. In one case the seal of approval must come from the critic who is to say what the experience ought to be if it is to match

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[5] H. R. Mackintosh, *Types of Modern Theology,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1937, p. 148.

the Founder's; in the other case the seal of approval is stamped by one's own value-judgments. . . . .[6]

A similar facing in two directions is reflected by liberal theology when it uses religious experience in another way. Although the authority of both Church and Bible had been undermined, liberalism was still in search of certainty. In making its accommodations to the modern outlook it was perfectly natural that liberalism should appeal to that which above all else seemed to lay claim to the intellectual allegiance of modern men, namely, empirical science and scientific method. Certainty could best be achieved, and the cognitive value of religious experience could most plausibly be defended, on the basis of a realistic theory of knowledge. Professor D. C. Macintosh is the outstanding exponent of this position.[7] His epistemology is that type of realism which asserts that at the moment of perception at least a part of the idea and a part of the object known are identical. Thus it is the real and independently existing object which is given in experience, although the complete and accurate knowledge of its nature is only acquired through further experimentation and verification. This is precisely what is meant by scientific method. In any science the object of investigation and its accessibility to human experience are presupposed. The basis for such presuppositions is the "prescientific experience of the ob-

[6] V. Ferm, "Theology and Religious Experience," in *The Nature of Religious Experience,* Harper & Bros., 1937, p. 30.

[7] Cf. his *Problem of Knowledge, Theology as an Empirical Science, The Reasonableness of Christianity.*

ject. There is a pre-botanical experience and knowledge of plants which is the necessary preliminary to starting upon scientific botanical investigation." [8] Professor Macintosh believes that religious knowledge is of the same type. In religious experience there is actually given the independently existing Divine Object. The reality of this Object is just as certain as the reality of any object of which we are aware.

On the basis of religious intuition, a cognitive religious experience which is able to stand the test of practical and intellectual criticism, there has been achieved a pre-theological assurance that the divine Being exists. This religious intuition is a special instance of *perception in a complex,* other examples of which are the intuitive awareness of one's own existence (in conscious experience), of the existence of other persons (in social experience), and of physical objects (in sense experience). In the complex of religious experience, at least of religious experience at its best, the religious subject is aware, in an empirical intuition of the existence of the religious Object, an Object of religious dependence which proves to be a Source of religious deliverance.[9]

It is the business of theology to analyze further the precise nature of God, and in so doing it follows the procedure of empirical science.

It is not necessary here to subject this position to thorough criticism. I wish merely to make three comments which are relevant to the central theme of this chapter. In the first place, we must remember that

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[8] *Theology as an Empirical Science,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1919, p. 91.

[9] *Ibid.*

the validity of a realistic theory of knowledge is dubious even when applied to objects of scientific knowledge. Professor Macintosh himself is, of course, one of our ablest epistemologists, but there are theologians who appear to assume that the exposure of certain difficulties in nineteenth-century positivism has eliminated any kind of positivism from serious consideration.[10] Actually, there is a good deal of disagreement concerning the realistic interpretation of scientific concepts. All of us, I assume, believe that we have knowledge of a sort whenever there is successful prediction, and one meaning of scientific knowledge has to do with propositions which become verified. We make predictions, state explicitly the operations to be performed, perform the operations, and get a result which fulfills the prediction. Such knowledge is "objective" merely because it is public. Anyone who wishes to perform the operations will, presumably, get the results which were anticipated. On this there is general agreement, but dispute arises the moment the realist asserts that there can be knowledge about the inner nature of things, or about that state of affairs which makes successful predictions possible. It may be that the only meaning scientific concepts have is in terms of the operations performed, rather than in terms of an objective world to which they refer.[11] When, therefore, we say that theology can be an empirical science we have the fur-

[10] Cf. H. P. Van Dusen, *The Plain Man Seeks for God,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1933, pp. 4-5.

[11] P. W. Bridgman, *Logic of Modern Physics,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1927; and *Nature of Physical Theory,* Princeton Univ. Press, Princeton, 1936.

ther problem of stating what is meant by empirical science. It is extremely doubtful whether we have the kind of knowledge of antecedent reality even in science for which a realistic theory of knowledge calls.

Even if we assume that certain specific "givens" in experience reveal to us something of the nature of an independent reality, it is not possible to include among these the object of religious experience. The latter simply is not a "concrete quality nor a quasi-impressional datum, uniquely apprehended with genuine immediacy, but rather a derived and mediated image or conception which is interpretatively read into perceptual or ideal objects." [12] Finally, analysis of the procedure under discussion shows that the idea of God which emerges is by no means exclusively the result of experimental inquiry. On the contrary, it shows quite definite traces of traditional theology. The *form* is experimentalism, but this is employed, at least to some extent, in the interest of demonstrating the validity of the more important doctrines of traditional Christianity.

Quite apart from the technical difficulties of this or any other form of liberal theology there are cultural factors which today place it in an embarrassing situation.[13] Whatever balance, dynamic, and appearance

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[12] F. R. Tennant, *Philosophy of the Sciences,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1932, p. 174.

[13] John Bennett has said that "the most important fact about contemporary American theology is the disintegration of liberalism" (*The Christian Century,* Nov. 8, 1933). Apparently there are others who feel that "disintegration is not too strong a word." Cf. Walter M. Horton, *Realistic Theology,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1934.

of consistency liberalism possessed has been due, as we have suggested, to the fact that it was trying to make Christianity palatable to the modern mind and also trying to make science palatable to the Fundamentalist. The process of alternately destroying and conserving was a task which needed to be performed and which gave the movement a dynamic. To the younger theologians it appears that this task, if not completed, is by no means the most important one which they face. Having made a series of concessions to science the question now arises as to why liberalism should not merge completely with humanism, which seems to be the logical outcome of this phase of liberal thought. If, on the other hand, there is still faith that historic Christianity has a value which ought to be conserved, the problem here is no longer that of steering a course between Fundamentalism and science. It is not the question of a liberal versus a conservative theology which is of vital importance. It seems rather to be a case of Christianity against the "world." The time for strategic retreats is over; this age calls for a positive attack.

Erstwhile liberals tend to become conservative as they contemplate the almost complete secularization of society. There are states which openly declare as their purpose that of controlling the whole of human life and of employing religious loyalty solely for ends of nationalism. The co-operation of Christianity and capitalistic democracy is seen in retrospect as an alliance of questionable value. The growing autonomy of our economic system is in many ways quite as unchristian as the totalitarian states. Paul Tillich has

interpreted our contemporary religious situation as being decisively influenced by "recent revolts against the spiritual situation and the social forms which prevailed during the closing decades of the nineteenth century." By these he means the "trinity of natural science, technique and capitalist economy," or "the spirit of capitalist society." [14] In the present situation there are those who feel that "what this world needs today is not in the first place new ideas or theories, but the message of divine authority which the Church alone can bring and the demonstration of the reality of the Church. Over against the false conceptions of state and community, the Church needs to affirm the existence of a God-given community which transcends all human divisions, and that *as a reality* and not merely as an ideal." [15] There is, then, a discernible tendency toward a conservatism in modern theology, or, as Reinhold Niebuhr has put it in his own case, many are moving "politically to the left, theologically to the right." The attempt to carry much of the gain of liberalism into this rightist movement often appears unsuccessful, and in some cases the new conservatism is not well grounded. It is clear, however, why traditionalism and experimentalism, which for a time worked together in liberal theology, should now seem incompatible. The choice is presented of following traditionalism into a conservative affirmation of the

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[14] *The Religious Situation,* tr. by H. R. Niebuhr, Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1932, p. 13.

[15] W. A. Visser 't Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its Function in Society,* Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1937, p. 85.

Christian faith against the secular forces of the modern world, or of following experimentalism to its logical outcome in pragmatic humanism.

III

Humanism may, from one point of view, be interpreted as the religious expression of genuine America. This is particularly the case if we think of the pragmatic philosophy as an expression of American life in general and of humanism as the religious application of pragmatism. Quite apart from the articulate pragmatic philosophy, however, if religious groups in America reflect upon their experience they may well arrive at a type of experimentalism. Many of these groups tried to retain something of the European flavor which they brought with them but were inevitably influenced by the new environment. There was no established Church whose traditions were to be defended and handed on. There were, on the contrary, many religious groups, none of which was the state religion, and which had to learn to get on together and prove their worth in the common task of building a good society. This give and take, with the emergence of some mutual tolerance and the hope of much more, is something we all wish to retain. It is important to see this clearly because a great deal of the talk about "the Church against the world" logically involves the return to an ecclesiastical authoritarianism and thus the destruction of even that part of experimentalism in which, I assume, we all believe.

Humanism may also be interpreted as the extension

of the modernist concessions to science. Impressed by the mechanical picture of the world which physical science seemed to paint, and wearied by the repeated failures to find a cogent argument for the existence of God, there was a tendency to accept the fact of the indifference of nature to man and the values he cherished, and to make of religion devotion to purely human ideals. The brave and defiant tone of this outlook is best stated by Bertrand Russell in his famous essay, "A Free Man's Worship," which concludes:

> Brief and powerless is Man's Life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way; for Man, condemned today to lose his dearest, tomorrow himself to pass through the gate of darkness, it remains only to cherish, ere yet the blow falls, the lofty thoughts that ennoble his little day; disdaining the coward terrors of the slave of Fate, to worship at the shrine his own hands have built; undismayed by the empire of chance, to preserve a mind free from the wanton tyranny that rules his outward life; proudly defiant of the irresistible forces that tolerate, for a moment, his knowledge and his condemnation, to sustain alone, a weary but unyielding Atlas, the world that his own ideals have fashioned despite the trampling march of unconscious power.[16]

Reflecting a similar philosophy, but much less defiant in tone, is this passage from M. C. Otto's *Things and Ideals:*

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[16] In *Mysticism and Logic,* W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1929.

It is thus a constructive social suggestion that we endeavor to give up, as the basis of our desire to win a satisfactory life, the quest for the companionship with a being behind or within the fleeting aspect of nature; that we assume the universe to be indifferent toward the human venture that means everything to us; that we acknowledge ourselves to be adrift in infinite space on our little earth, the sole custodians of our ideals. There need be no spirit of defiance in this. . . . . Defiance testifies that the challenge has not really been accepted. No; accept the stern condition of being psychically alone in all the reach of space and time, that we may then, with new zest, enter the warm valley of earthly existence—warm with the human impulse, aspiration and affection; warm with the unconquerable thing called life; turn from the recognition of our cosmic isolation to a new sense of human togetherness, and so discover in a growing solidarity, in a progressively ennobled humanity, in an increasing joy in living, the goal we have all along blindly sought, and build on earth the fair city we have looked for in a compensatory world beyond.[17]

I have quoted these well-known passages here because they state so clearly the difficulty which theists frequently point out in the humanist position.[18] This difficulty results from the strange mixture of pessimism and optimism. The dominant control of the physical world is unconscious force which is completely indifferent, if not hostile, to human aspiration. At the same time there is faith in man, his ideals, and his

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[17] Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1924, pp. 289-290.

[18] Cf. W. M. Horton, *Theism and the Modern Mood,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1930, Chap. II; Charles Hartshorne, *Beyond Humanism,* Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1937; Van Dusen, *op. cit.,* Chap I.

ability to "build on earth the fair city we have looked for in a compensatory world beyond." Such a faith is proclaimed even though ideals and values have no cosmic ground or support. This position, we are told, is intolerable. If we follow consistently the view of nature here proclaimed we inevitably become disillusioned even concerning human ideals and find ourselves engulfed by a philosophy of futility similar to that of Joseph Wood Krutch.[19] If, on the other hand, we emphasize our faith in human ability and human values, and try to justify that faith, we are driven to a position very much like theism.

Now this is an interesting and ingenious argument, valid so far as it goes, but it does not dispose of humanism. Indeed, we frequently fail to make the necessary distinction between two types of philosophy in the naturalistic tradition: the metaphysical type and the positivistic type. The former is suggested by the passages quoted from Russell and Otto. The notion there is that we have knowledge of the ultimate nature of things and that nature is adequately and accurately described in terms of physical science. We know, in other words, that there is no God. A religious philosophy, which wishes to remain naturalistic as well, will try to show that the universe is such that God may very well be a part of nature. As an alternative to the mechanistic picture certain theologians find Whitehead's philosophy of organism a very useful basis for naturalistic theism.[20] In this later writings E. S. Ames

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[19] Cf. his *The Modern Temper,* Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1929.

[20] An important example is H. N. Wieman.

has shown a leaning in the same direction. The following is an able statement of the position as he sees it:

No doubt the ideals arise in human experience, but they are not on that account to be discredited by saying that they are merely human. They are as real as the body or the rock on which the body rests, and they are as much a part of the cosmos. In these ideal aspects of experience God is immediately possessed through human insight and feeling. God is not supernatural, but wholly natural, just as ideals are natural. The word "natural" may be dismissed, for it came to have significance at the point where an order of nature was distinguished as the experienced opposite of the supernatural. Neither term can properly be used without the other, for each implies the other. Only if natural be made synonymous with the real, can it be adequate to express all that is experienced; but when the natural is given this meaning it includes the ideal, the mental and the spiritual, as well as the so-called physical and material.[21]

There is also the positivistic type of naturalism which does not claim to have the sort of knowledge that can say in advance of experimentation that nature is unfriendly to human ideals. Nature is just as friendly, hostile, or indifferent as it turns out to be. This philosophy issues in the pragmatic humanism of John Dewey. Concerning the theistic criticism we have been discussing he says:

The view I have advanced is sometimes treated as if the identification of the divine with ideal ends left the ideal

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[21] *Religion,* Henry Holt & Co., New York, 1929, p. 174.

wholly without roots in existence and without support from existence. The objection implies that my view commits one to such a separation of the ideal and the existent that the ideal has no chance to find lodgment even as a seed that might grow and bear fruit. On the contrary, what I have been criticizing is the *identification* of the ideal with a particular Being, especially when that identificaton makes necessary the conclusion that this Being is outside of nature, and what I have tried to show is that the ideal itself has its roots in natural conditions; it emerges when the imagination idealizes existence by laying hold of the possibilities offered to thought and action. There are values, goods, actually realized upon a natural basis—the good of human association, of art and knowledge. The idealizing imagination seizes upon the most precious things found in the climacteric moments of experience and projects them. We need no external criterion and guarantee for their goodness. They are had, they exist as good, and out of them we frame our ideal ends.[22]

The objection referred to is applicable, then, to one form of humanism only. When men first tried to adjust their emotional life to the possibility that the universe was merely a mechanical order it is understandable that they should have cried out with exaggerated boldness their loyalty to highest human ideals even though these had no place in nature. But, as we have seen, naturalism may explicitly state that it includes human values as a part of the natural order. Both naturalistic theism and pragmatic humanism believe that the environment may nourish values and provide

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[22] *A Common Faith,* Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1934, pp. 47-48.

the conditions which make possible their fulfillment. The former, however, attributes divine characteristics to the environment and finds that a part of religious experience is concerned with making the right adjustment to it. Thus, one of Professor Wieman's many definitions of God is, "that in the universe which will yield maximum security and increase of human good when lives are properly adjusted to him." [23] There is something of this in Dewey's philosophy of religion also, although his emphasis on the divine lies in the direction of ideal ends, recognizing their connection with environmental conditions.

> We are in the presence neither of ideals completely embodied in existence nor yet of ideals that are mere rootless ideals, fantasies, utopias. For there are forces in nature and society that generate and support the ideals. They are further unified by the action that gives them coherence and solidity. It is this *active* relation between ideal and actual to which I would give the name "God."[24]

The limitations of humanism have been described in an earlier chapter, and there is no need to repeat them here. The precise nature of the difficulties involved in rational and empirical methods can best be seen by examining their attempts to give us knowledge of God.

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[23] *The Wrestle of Religion with Truth,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1927, p. 59.

[24] *A Common Faith.*

CHAPTER FIVE

GOD AND NATURE

I

NATURAL THEOLOGY HAS TRADITIONALLY DEALT WITH those aspects of God which, presumably, could be demonstrated by reason. It is the argument from nature to God. The history of all such arguments shows that they are not logically coercive. They rest upon undemonstrated assumptions, and whenever these assumptions are shown to be other than self-evident truths the force of the arguments is lost. Something other than knowledge, therefore, has been a part of natural theology.

The question of the relation between God and Nature is dependent upon what we mean by these two terms. We can assign the word "God" to something in nature as experienced by all people. In this case there is no problem of proving that God exists. There is the problem only of persuading that something already known to exist has the characteristics of divinity. If, on the other hand, God is defined as a personal being, good and powerful, the creator of the world, and the goal of history, there is the problem of proving that such a one exists. If God is completely transcend-

ent of nature it follows that we can never discover him by the ordinary processes of empirical or rational knowledge. We must wait upon him to take the initiative and reveal himself to us. On this assumption there is no place for natural theology. If, on the other hand, God is accessible to human experience and reason, and at the same time is a being which cannot be pointed to as easily as we can point to colors or to such natural objects as trees, we are faced with the task of moving from the known facts of nature to God by a more or less difficult route of demonstration.

Nature, too, is a word which is by no means unambiguous. A naïve realism coupled with a naïve faith in the progressive development of knowledge will prompt us to think of nature as always remaining what it is and of science as a series of disclosures of its inner meaning. Yet a more profound reflection leads us to realize that our conception of nature is in part the result of our attitude toward it, the purposes we pursue, and the method we employ in attempting to know something about it. Nature as experienced is many and varied. Otherwise we should find it impossible to feel any kinship whatever with primitive religion or with Greek science. That we do have great difficulty along these lines shows that certain aspects of nature as experienced seem to us more important or more "real" than others. Nature has been and still is experienced as terrifying, peaceful, destructive, helpful, vague, clear, purposeful, mechanical, developing, cyclical, and so on. What in any generation is taken as the "real nature" is likely to have a close connection with the method we use in

our science and natural philosophy, while method is in turn influenced by our theory of the real. From one point of view Professor Whitehead is right when he says that "theory dictates method, and that any particular method is only applicable to theories of one correlate species." [1] It is also true that "the general character of any philosophy is likely to be determined by its initial assumptions and its method." [2] The point here is not to discuss the relation of theory and method, but to state that what we take to be true nature depends upon certain purposes, assumptions, and attitudes with which we approach the world, and the methods we employ in attempting to understand it. What is supposed to be known about nature will be the sum total of the propositions of the natural sciences, although one of these sciences may be considered more basic than the others.

II

The changing concepts of nature and of proper methods of investigation are enormously important for natural theology. They influence not only the type of argument used but the idea of God as well. To Plato, for example, the true objects of knowledge and thus the real in nature were certain patterns, forms, or ideas, which were eternal and immutable. Ordinary experience gives us contact with only the half real, shifting, becoming aspects of the world. A

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[1] *Adventures of Ideas,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1933, p. 283.

[2] C. I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929, p. 1.

disciplined intellect can, however, disclose the permanent Ideas which give meaning to experience. The ultimate reality, or the Good, is the highest of the Ideas, immutable and self-sufficient. The theological problem of showing why a perfect and self-sufficient being should bring into actuality a world less perfect than himself is traced in an interesting fashion by Professor A. O. Lovejoy.

Plato, tacitly making the crucial assumption that the existence of many entities not eternal, not supersensible, and far from perfect, was inherently desirable, finds in his otherworldly Absolute, in the Idea of the Good itself, the reason why that Absolute cannot exist alone. The concept of Self-sufficing Perfection, by a bold logical inversion, was—without losing any of its original implications—converted into the concept of a Self-Transcending Fecundity. A timeless and incorporal One became the logical ground as well as the dynamic source of the existence of a temporal and material and extremely multiple and variegated universe.[3]

This point of view was brought into the Christian tradition chiefly through Neoplatonism, and Lovejoy has quoted a passage from Plotinus which illustrates in a very illuminating way this view of nature.

The One is perfect because it seeks for nothing, and possesses nothing, and has need of nothing; and being perfect, it overflows, and thus its superabundance produces an Other. . . . . Whenever anything reaches its own

[3] A. O. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being*, Harvard Univ. Press, Cambridge, 1936, p. 49.

perfection, we see that it cannot endure to remain in itself, but generates and produces some other thing. Not only beings having the power of choice, but also those which are by nature incapable of choice, and even inanimate things, send forth as much of themselves as they can: thus fire emits heat and snow cold and drugs act upon other things. . . . . How then should the Most Perfect Being and the First Good remain shut up in itself, as though it were jealous or impotent—itself the potency of all things? . . . . Something must therefore be begotten of it.[4]

In nature so conceived the classifications which we use in grouping certain items of experience are not made by man for convenience or in order to serve certain purposes. They are in themselves objective, and turn out to be the Platonic Ideas which are the most real entities in the world. To know is to ascend from changing experience to a grasp of the changeless patterns. To have complete understanding is to gain a vision of the pattern of patterns, the First Principle of the universe. This highest principle, Idea, or pattern is, in Plotinus, also the supreme generative reality. We can see all about us the obvious fact that objects send out effects of their natures beyond themselves. "Fire emits heat and snow cold." However, the heat beyond the fire is not quite so intense as the fire itself. All things "send forth as much of themselves as they can," but what is sent forth is always less than the sender. Natural objects, however, are not self-explanatory or self-sustaining. They are dependent upon some higher generative principle for whatever reality they pos-

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

sess. Thus we are driven to the highest principle, which does not depend upon anything else and which is greater than the whole universe, since all things are emanations from it. God, therefore, turns out to be the absolutely perfect being, and the marks of perfection are absolute self-sufficiency, potency of all other things, eternality, and changelessness. The greatest theoretical problem is, as we have seen, that of showing that there should have been a world. The point of departure is not to take the physical world for granted and then try to demonstrate the existence of God. Rather, those aspects of nature as experienced which were taken as primary necessitated the postulate of a perfect being. God thus defined was taken for granted and the problem was to show why such a self-sufficient and perfect being should create a dependent and imperfect world. On these assumptions, among others, rests the plausibility of the ontological proof in which occurs the phrase, "that, than which nothing greater can be conceived." And so we can readily see that our arguments for God depend upon our unproved initial assumptions and upon our method. It is interesting to note that the emphasis which is here placed upon the immutability and timelessness of God, and which comes from Platonism, is contrary to that part of Christian theology which is derived from Judaism. The God of the Old Testament is worthy of reverence not because he is above time and history but because he acts in time and is trusted to bring history to a divine fulfillment.

III

The approach of natural theology in Thomas Aquinas and in the Neo-Thomists is based upon the scientific and philosophical method of Aristotle. If it was the study of mathematics which suggested to Plato that the most important aspects of nature were eternal Ideas, it was Aristotle's biological studies which laid the foundation of his generalized conception of nature and his mode of investigation. The obvious facts of plant and animal life suggest purposive movement or growth. The seed carries within it certain potentialities which, when given proper material conditions, develop into actuality. The real meaning of anything is to be found not in its origins but in what it becomes. The human infant and the little ape may be given the same food, but in one case the outcome is a man and in the other a full-grown ape. The inherent form in each of these plays, therefore, a decisive role in its development. The most characteristic features of nature as Aristotle sees them are things with capacity to move or develop toward their proper goals, the presence of purpose in such activity, and the reality of both matter and form, or potentiality and actuality, which will account for the movement. The typical argument for God which we find in Thomistic philosophy depends upon these assumptions. Particularly important are the idea of purpose and the belief that motion has to be accounted for. Motion implies that things are movable, that they are potentially that toward which they are moving. But actuality is, in a sense, already present. The real cause of motion is that which is already

actualized, just as that which produces heat must be already hot. Thus the fact of motion depends upon two things. First, if anything is in motion it means that it is now merely potentially, not actually, something else, and that it is on the way toward becoming that something else. Second, motion does not take place unless there is the drawing power of that which is already actualized and therefore unmoved, that is, that which is not merely in the process of becoming actualized. It follows, therefore, that there must be a God, an unmoved mover, a completely actualized being, to account for motion. Also, since motion is always purposive, even the motion of those things which lack the power of making choices, it follows that there must be a God, an intelligent being, who directs these motions and by whom all natural things are guided toward a definite goal.

IV

To anyone who has caught the spirit of natural science since the days of Galileo the above arguments are not persuasive, because the very assumptions upon which they were based are the ones which modern science has discarded. The sort of question which we put to nature ignored whatever purposive quality it may possess. We stopped asking *why* bodies move, and concentrated our attention on the discovery of the laws according to which they move. Thus there was no need of a God to explain why bodies lacking intelligence move purposively toward goals. Also the assumption was discarded that motion as such calls

for explanation. There is no more reason to assume that rest is the normal state of things than that motion is. The latter can just as well be taken for granted as a natural property of the physical world. Change in direction or in velocity still had to be explained, but these were helpfully accounted for on the mechanical hypothesis.

Modern scientific method included two important phases: the direct appeal to observed facts as the starting point of investigation and for the verification of laws, and the reduction of the facts observed to mathematical formulae. In spite of a good deal of lip service to the empirical method, it was the success of mathematics which first captivated the imagination of modern man. Those aspects of nature came to be considered basic which could be measured—the geometrical properties of space, mechanical motion, and forces which produced acceleration. Nature could be read if one understood the language in which it was written, and that language was thought to consist of mathematical symbols. There was, of course, considerable warrant for this faith because of the practical results which the method achieved.

Mathematical deductions are mind-born; they pertain to reason and are not dependent on experience. When, therefore, we assume that our mathematical deductions and operations will be successful in portraying the workings of nature, we are assuming that nature also is rational, and therefore a definite parallelism or correspondence exists between the two worlds, the mathematical and the physical. A priori, there appears to be no logical necessity why any

such parallelism should exist. Here, however, we are faced with a situation over which it is useless to philosophize. Success has attended the efforts of mathematical physicists in so large a number of cases that, however marvelous it may appear, we can scarcely escape the conclusion that nature must be rational and susceptible to mathematical law.[5]

The mathematical method served the psychological need for the feeling of certainty. What this method means is, in the first place, an intuitive grasp of clear and distinct ideas, self-evident truths, or axioms. These then form the basis upon which deductions can be made with precision and demonstrative certainty. If nature is actually written in mathematical symbols, if it is without exception law-abiding, and if the axioms with which we start are not merely formal but true of nature itself, then we can proceed to unlock the mysteries and have complete certainty about the world we live in. Now this view has important implications for theology. Religion is vitally interested in achieving reliable knowledge of the Being who controls nature, and of the way he works, in order that lives may be properly adjusted to him. If God is the essential mathematical structure of the universe, then it seems we are on the path toward achieving exact knowledge of his mind and will. It is not improbable that desire to know God was an important motivating force in the work of the proponents of the mathematical method. John Langdon-Davies has said that "Copernicus, Kep-

[5] A. d'Abro, *The Evolution of Scientific Thought from Newton to Einstein,* Liveright Publishing Corp., New York, 1927, pp. xii-xiii.

ler, Galileo, Newton, Leibniz, and the rest did not merely believe in God in an orthodox sort of way, they believed that their work told humanity more about God than had been known before. If men had not wanted to know about God, it is highly doubtful if they would have worried to know about nature." [6] The God that they revealed was the necessary mathematical structure of the universe whose laws operate with inexorable regularity. This God's universe has a natural perfection, but is not concerned with human good or ill.

The traditional cosmological proof is also closely connected with this way of viewing nature. The world is seen as a network of cause and effect relationships, every event being the necessary result of a preceding cause. There is a chain of causality running back step by step, but since an infinite regress is impossible there must be a point at which we come to the First and Unconditioned Cause. God is this First Cause of all the different causal series.

V

But once again there occurred a change of emphasis in what was meant by scientific method and that nature which it investigates, and this change rendered doubtful the validity of the previous arguments for God. The change to which I refer is the emphasis on the empirical phase of method. Empirically, the cause and effect relationship is, as Hume pointed out, an observed conjunction of two observed events. Analysis

[6] *Man and His Universe,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1930, p. 11.

of one event alone, apart from previous experience, cannot tell us what its cause was or what its effects will be. We experience events within the universe and discover some which are mutually dependent. We do not experience the whole of nature as an event and have no compelling reason for postulating a cause for it. Even if we were to have a complete knowledge of nature we should not know that it had a cause or what the nature of that cause might be.

But quite apart from specific criticisms of the cosmological argument, the empirical method has brought about a fundamental change in our conception of the meaning and purpose of our theories concerning nature. There is, to be sure, a certain aesthetic satisfaction in gazing upon a great system of scientific law which purports to be an adequate expression of the universe. It would be, and is, more than aesthetic pleasure in so far as these laws give exact statements of the future course of events and suggestions for our adjustment to them. But the history of modern science is full of instances where perceived facts appeared which had not been anticipated by the previous interpretations of nature, and which in some cases could not be fitted in with previous theory. For example, the mechanical view had been so successful in explaining many things that Helmholtz, in the middle of the nineteenth century, said:

> Finally, therefore, we discover the problem of physical material science to be to refer natural phenomena back to unchangeable attractive and repulsive forces whose intensity depends upon distance. The solubility of this problem

is the condition of the complete comprehensibility of nature.[7]

Hardly had he made this pronouncement when observed facts in connection with magnetism, electric currents, and other phenomena contradicted the mechanical theory. No matter how completely our theories account for hitherto observed facts they do not enable us to anticipate all our future experiences, while some of those experiences force us radically to revise our theories. This phase of the history of modern science has not caused all people to abandon the notion that there is a "truth" about nature which, after a few more attempts, we shall discover. The ideal for some is still an achievement of absolutely certain knowledge about a real, antecedently existing nature. But the empirical method looks upon our theories as valuable only partially in virtue of their success in relating systematically the facts of the world as they *have* been experienced. More important than this is their value in guiding us to new facts and fruitful experiments. Knowledge itself comes to mean successful prediction about the future rather than ideas which correspond to a past reality.

Furthermore, the very *meaning* of scientific concepts is stated in terms of empirical consequences. A particularly good illustration of this is afforded by Einstein's definition of simultaneity, a definition which is of crucial importance in relativity theory. The question which Einstein is considering is that of determin-

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[7] Quoted by Einstein and Infeld, *The Evolution of Physics*, p. 58.

ing whether or not events at a distance occur simultaneously. The concept of simultaneity

does not exist for the physicist until he has the possibility of discovering whether or not it is fulfilled in an actual case. We thus require a definition of simultaneity such that this definition supplies us with the method by means of which, in the present case, he can decide whether or not both lightning strokes occurred simultaneously. As long as this requirement is not satisfied, I allow myself to be deceived as a physicist (and of course the same applies if I am not a physicist), when I imagine that I am able to attach a meaning to the statement of simultaneity. . . . . There is only *one* demand to be made of the definition of simultaneity, namely, that in every real case it must supply us with an empirical decision as to whether or not the conception that has to be defined is fulfilled.[8]

These requirements appear to be fulfilled in the following way: Suppose lightning strikes railroad tracks at places *A* and *B*.

By measuring along the rails, the connecting line *AB* should be measured up and an observer placed at the mid-point *M* of the distance *AB*. This observer should be supplied with an arrangement (e.g., two mirrors inclined at 90°) which allows him visually to observe both places *A* and *B* at the same time. If the observer perceives the two flashes of lightning at the same time, then they are simultaneous.[9]

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[8] *Relativity*, New York, 1921, pp. 26, 28. By permission of Peter Smith, publisher.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

This approach to the problem of understanding nature means that there is no possibility of formulating theories apart from empirical consequences or the actual performance of certain operations.

P. W. Bridgman, who has developed this notion of "operationalism," insists that

> concepts can be defined only in the range of actual experiment, and are undefined and meaningless in regions as yet untouched by experiment. It follows that strictly speaking we cannot make statements at all about regions as yet untouched, and that when we do make such statements, as we inevitably shall, we are making a conventionalized extrapolation, of the looseness of which we must be fully conscious, and the justification of which is in the experiment of the future.[10]

The meaning of scientific concepts is defined, not in terms of the properties belonging to objects independent of relations and experiment, but in terms of the operations performed when one is engaged in the task of finding the objects in question.

We may illustrate by considering the concept of length: what do we mean by the length of an object? We evidently know what we mean by length if we can tell what the length of any and every object is, and for the physicist nothing more is required. To find the length of an object, we have to perform certain physical operations. The concept of length is therefore fixed when the operations by which length is measured are fixed: That is, the concept of length involves as much as and nothing more than the

[10] *Logic of Modern Physics,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1927, p. 7.

set of operations by which length is determined. In general, we mean by any concept nothing more than a set of operations; *the concept is synonymous with the corresponding set of operations.*[11]

VI

The brief survey we have made of the types of natural philosophy and theology should make it clear that nature as experienced is capable of suggesting many approaches to its understanding. None of these approaches, furthermore, can give us an exhaustive knowledge of the real nature. There are at least two lessons which we may learn from this. First, all we can possibly mean by nature is the variety of ways in which we experience it. It is a reasonable assumption that we as human beings are always in contact with nature, even though it is alternately the object of love and hate, fear and trust. But, you ask, is nature *really* worthy of our trust and love, is it *really* our enemy, friend, or a completely indifferent power? All we can say is that it is experienced in all of these, and in many additional ways. Of course we should like to know what nature really is at heart, and this brings us to the second lesson. Our knowledge of nature, in the strict sense of that term, is limited to that aspect which lends itself to a type of study resulting in our making reliable predictions about future experience. Knowledge has to do with nature in its orderly and predictive behavior, although we recognize that this is an abstraction from a much wider context. Among our ex-

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

periences of nature, we do find certain regularities of behavior, or repeated associations of events. It is this which has the possibility of becoming what we call knowledge. We arrive at known objects when we subject these regularities to more precise analysis; concentrating our attention upon their quantitative aspects in respect to degree or amount of regularity and mutual dependence among events, so that we can institute controls and accurately anticipate future experience. Even here our knowledge does not possess that certainty which the mathematical method claimed for itself. Since truth is a property of ideas which are verified in experience, it follows that complete truth would require complete experience, a manifest impossibility. It would also require an assurance, which we do not possess, that no future experience can occur which will invalidate our present prediction. Thus it is only an abstraction from nature as experienced about which we can have knowledge, and the knowledge we do have possesses at best a high degree of probability.

It is within some such framework as this that natural theology ought to proceed. Does nature present features which are of importance to the religious consciousness and which at the same time can become objects of knowledge as we are employing that word? Can we come to a knowledge of God through nature? One of the things which the God of religion is trusted to do is to deliver men from evil. There are, of course, many types of evil and therefore many types of salvation. The first thing to note is that we can observe at least partial salvation from some kinds of evil going

on all the while. Men are being saved from many consequences of disease, and by proper adjustment to nature we can be assured of more healthy and longer life. People are also saved from self-centered lives to lives of usefulness, from lives motivated by conflicting and relative values to lives filled with unitary purpose, from lives weighed down by a sense of the futility of all things to lives filled with a sense of great significance. If God is that in nature which brings deliverance from evil, then whenever one has experienced salvation he has also experienced the activity of God. We could follow the same procedure regarding other processes which are taken to be the mark of the divine and to this extent have natural knowledge of God. The God so described, however, is hardly all that has been claimed for the God of the Christian tradition, nor is this God an object of *certain* knowledge.

For one thing, we have the problem of reducing to precision and accuracy the process of salvation, or any similar process which we only vaguely understand. It is difficult, if not impossible, to define what we mean by salvation in such a way that it possesses objective clarity and carries with it the means of verifying empirically the fact that salvation has taken place. Furthermore, we have the problem of stating unambiguously what in nature is to be utilized, and what operations one is to perform, if he is to experience salvation. If we could do these things we should have a knowledge of the activity of God as definite as any piece of scientific knowledge. In performing the prescribed set of operations

we should be going through the process of making the proper religious adjustment and we could depend upon God to bring about the anticipated results. So far as I know, it is Professor D. C. Macintosh who has made the clearest and most explicit claim that theology can accomplish this. But it is because his statements of position are so lucid that they disclose also the limitations of this method. For example, no matter how carefully we lay down the conditions of salvation, we find people who say that, having followed the directions, they still fail to get the results. Now a part of what we mean by scientific knowledge is that it is public, that is, anyone who wishes to perform the operations will, presumably, get the anticipated results. Failure to do so is probably due to experimental error which the talented scientist should be able specifically to point out to the experimenter. If he wishes to, he may repeat the experiment, avoiding the errors of the first attempt, and, if he makes no new mistakes, he will have the experience which was predicted. But when confronted with the report of people to the effect that they have made the right religious adjustment and still did not have positive results, all Professor Macintosh can say is "that this is not so, since the right religious adjustment, as defined, includes as one of its essential features *persistence* in the adjustment long enough and intensely enough to overcome all inhibition and resistance, and thus to cross the threshold into overt reality." [12] This is a nice way of begging the question.

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[12] "Empirical Theology and Some of Its Misunderstanders," in *Review of Religion*, May, 1939.

Until we are able to state the meaning of persistence in terms of actual degree of intensity and quantity of time we do not have very highly probable knowledge. Without such knowledge we cannot be particularly helpful in pointing out experimental error. My point is that although we do have natural knowledge of a sort concerning the activity of God in bringing deliverance from evil, the type of datum with which we are dealing precludes the possibility of reducing such knowledge to a precision resembling scientific procedure.

Nor does this much knowledge reveal a great deal of the God whom we worship. One set of factors operates to relieve us from hunger, another helps us out of a neurosis, still others enable us partially to transcend our selfish natures. Salvation as experienced, and the conditions which bring it about, suggest a plurality of things in nature which, to this extent, possess the characteristics of the divine. The God of religion, however, is certainly more than a collection of natural conditions; he is a single Being. Again, the agencies through which we are saved may be material factors which although actually helpful means to desirable ends, cannot be known to be acting with any moral purpose in view. Yet God's activity is ultimately significant and purposeful. Finally, it is only this and that in nature as experienced which appear to us as good. There are other things which appear harmful and evil. Nature as a whole is not known to be either good or bad. But the God we worship is worthy of absolute trust and wholehearted love.

That so little can be known about God through na-

ture must be taken as a fact. Beyond this we enter the realm of faith, and it is the business theology to show the reasonableness, if not the necessity, of faith, and to explore its content. Here we shall see what faith can add in the area of natural theology.

At this point it may be helpful to return to a consideration of the experimental interpretation of scientific concepts which seemed to lead us to the operationalism of Bridgman, and more generally to a pragmatic philosophy similar to that of John Dewey. The former discussion more or less assumed that this was *the* way of philosophizing about the meaning and import of procedures which lead to knowledge. There is still an important controversy in this field, however, which is kept alive by the cogency of a realistic position. Realism interprets the significance of the work of science in terms of the discovery of an independently existent world and holds that some of the theories at least are fairly accurate expressions of what the world is like. The atomic theory, for example, or light waves, fields and their tensors, are not merely fictions or mental constructs or fruitful hypotheses; they actually denote that which exists. As Bernhard Bavink puts it, *"A physical hypothesis is the presumption of the existence of a general state of affairs, lying at the back of certain phenomena which are matters of experience, and allowing the phenomena in question to be deduced qualitatively and quantatively (mathematically) from the presence of the said state of affairs and its assumed laws."* [13] The

[13] Bernhard Bavink, *The Natural Sciences*, D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1932, p. 42.

point of view previously considered would look upon these same concepts as constructs of the human mind rather than as discoveries, or they may be necessary fictions or conventions, or they may find their meaning in terms of certain operations performed in the laboratory. For realism the value of a scientific concept is its faithful description of a truly existent order of nature. For experimentalism the value of a scientific concept lies in its contribution to the economy of thought, its fruitfulness in leading to further experiment, or its reliability in helping us to anticipate accurately future experiences.

In order to make this difference as clear as possible, let us consider again the relatively simple illustration concerning the length of an object. For the realist an object had a length before he turned his eye toward it or began measuring it. There was an existent situation there which is ultimately the standard against which the judgment, "This object has a length of ten feet," is made true or false. The operationalist, on the other hand, finds that there is no meaning whatever to the notion of length apart from the techniques of measuring. It is impossible for one to compare his measurement with an independent reality. He can only compare one measurement with another. Doubt about the so-called accuracy of the first operation cannot be removed by some mysterious way of checking with the assumed "real" length. It can be checked only by repeated operations of the same type. The success of the measurement can be determined by consequences. If there is a wall which I wish to cover with paper, and,

having measured the wall and paper, I find that the paper completely and exactly covers the wall when I apply it, I know what I mean by successful measurement. But the realist will persist in asking why I was successful in this operation. He will say that this success gives us inferential knowledge that the wall did have certain dimensions prior to my doing anything about it, and that these dimensions were accurately disclosed in the process of my measuring. There is, in other words, a state of affairs which makes my predictions possible.

There are practical and psychological factors which may be as illuminating as the purely theoretical issue for the bearing of this dispute on theology. Thus the experimentalist may point out that his position gives the better account of the universally acknowledged value of tentativeness in scientific procedure. If we are always concentrating our attention upon getting knowledge about an antecedent state of affairs we shall be tempted to assume that our present theories are actually true and in some sense final statements concerning reality. In this case our present outlook would tend to legislate concerning the type of future experience which could be considered "real," and so impede the discovery of new facts. Whatever perceptions could not be fitted in with our alleged knowledge of nature would be ruled out as "subjective." And has this not happened many times in the history of science? The realistic hypothesis has impeded time and again the revision of theory in the light of new experience. "The first lesson of our recent experience with relativity is

merely an intensification and emphasis of the lesson which all past experience has also taught, namely, that when experiment is pushed into new domains, we must be prepared for new facts, of an entirely different character from those of our former experience." [14] If we realize that our categories are free creations of the human mind and not uniquely dictated by the external world, we are in a psychological frame of mind which will enable us more readily to alter the categories in the interest of better serving the purpose of investigation. We should be far better off if we should abandon the quest for absolute certainty for which the realistic position calls. It may be that some of us have failed to become sufficiently mature to face the precarious features of the world or to realize that the best we can do is to acquire probable knowledge or practical certainty. The desire to have a definite structure of nature which we can know and which will answer our questions with a categorical "yes" or "no," is very much like the child who is not yet ready to stand on his own feet in the face of difficult problems and so runs to his father for the answers.

Let us see now how the realist would deal with these same considerations. He might very well say that realism is by no means unfavorable to tentativeness. It is altogether possible for realism to recognize the fact that things have not been properly characterized in the past and to urge that we be genuinely moderate in our claims concerning them. The realist need be no more

[14] Bridgman, *Logic of Modern Physics,* p. 2.

guilty than the experimentalist of becoming an instrument for perpetuating historic fallacies. Furthermore, realism gives a better account of what is probably an extremely forceful motivation in the whole enterprise of getting knowledge, namely, the desire to know what is the case. Facts in the sense of "whatever is the case" are assumed by the realist to ask and give no quarter, and care not at all whether we characterize them or not. By failing to consider this latter, and primary nature of fact, the experimentalist falls into a basic contradiction regarding knowledge. By failing to distinguish between facts in the sense of what *we take* to be the case, and facts in the sense of *whatever is* the case, he falls into the error of translating a sound methodological caution into an unsound theory of existence. A virtue as great as tentativeness is that of intellectual honesty, and this implies that we are not *making* a world to meet our wishes, but are *being constrained* and led by a state of affairs which existed before we appeared on the scene. If it is lack of maturity which prompts people to seek for certainty it is also lack of maturity to believe that there are no categories which are dictated by an objective world. It is like the adolescent who has left home for the first time and finds it great fun to live without the rigid parental control which dominated the atmosphere of his home. But when he becomes truly mature he will discover that he cannot do anything he wishes, that nature too imposes upon him many compulsions.

The basic contradiction regarding knowledge referred to in the above paragraph needs further elabora-

tion. J. H. Woodger [15] has suggested a specific phase of the difficulty in the work of Mach. Mach maintains on the one hand that all of human experience can be analyzed into elements which are essentially of the same nature. This being the case, insoluble problems such as the relation between body and mind are disposed of. This much of Mach's position would suggest that sensations alone make up the whole of reality. But, on the other hand, he speaks of the "biological task of science" as that of providing "the fully developed human individual with as perfect a means of orienting himself as possible." [16] Presumably there is, then, an environment of some sort to which the human individual is to orient himself. But this would seem to necessitate taking the meaning of environment in a realistic sense. Furthermore, there is the frequent appeal to the evolutionary doctrine to account for certain mental characteristics found in men. "For example, he wishes to show that the pursuit of science is a development from processes which are to be recognized even in much less highly evolved animals. But what meaning can we give to evolution if it is not to be understood realistically, i.e., as a process which has happened in real animals and plants at a time when there were no human individuals to know and think about them?" [17]

A similar criticism is made of pragmatism by Professor E. T. Adams in an unpublished dissertation, a

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[15] *Biological Principles*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1929, pp. 85-92.

[16] *Ibid.*, p. 89.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 90.

detailed study of "The Epistemology of John Dewey." [18] Professor Adams finds the difficulty in many areas of pragmatic philosophy, but we may center our attention for the moment on the claim that those entities which the realist takes to be independently existing things are really elements abstracted from experience. At the same time Dewey believes that objects of experience are distinguished from each other and are still considered things of "crude or macroscopic experience—the sun, earth, plants and animals of common, everyday life." [19] These things are, I assume, to be taken as real. Yet of other things, such as body and mind, Dewey says they are reflective abstractions, secondary objects, and are not to be treated as independent. So the question arises as to where abstraction begins. This difficulty is seen very clearly in connection with the attempt to give a biological account of thought. Here Dewey must accept, of course, the primary reality of organism and environment. Yet from another point of view these are both abstractions from that more inclusive thing known as "life." Furthermore, in order to give his biological account of thought Dewey must *know* that the organism has needs. Yet he tells us that the known object is constituted by the knowing and does not exist independent of the process; hence the known organism is not the one which gave rise to reflection in the first place. If it did not exist independent of knowing in the way Dewey knows

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[18] What follows in this paragraph is based directly on Dr. Adams' work.

[19] *Experience and Nature* (revised edition), W. W. Norton & Co., New York, 1929, p. 5.

it to exist, then it could not give rise to reflection. The pragmatist, in other words, relies heavily on the evolutionary theory, but one of the most certain implications of this theory is that objects existed before they were experienced, and that the truth about them is transempirical in the same sense. That is, the truth of the evolutionary theory must be held in a non-pragmatic sense before it can be appealed to as a support of pragmatic doctrine.

As we follow this dispute between the realist and the experimentalist it may appear that the two positions issue from irreconcilable points of view. On further reflection, however, we may find a way of combining the values of both. If we should be successful in this endeavor we shall have made an important step in answering two of the questions already raised. For one thing, the dispute here under consideration is, I believe, essentially an aspect of the opposition between experimentalism and faith. If, therefore, we discover a mode of reconciliation here we may also hope to move on to an answer to the fundamental problem raised in the first chapter, namely, the opposition between experimentalism and tradition. In the second place, we have discovered in the present chapter that while experimental knowledge may give us some assurance of the activity of God in nature, it falls far short of disclosing the kind of God for which the religious consciousness calls. But it may be that we can move by way of faith, a faith not only legitimate but even necessary, to a God who is really God.

CHAPTER SIX

GOD AND EVIL

NATURAL KNOWLEDGE MUST BE SUPPLEMENTED BY faith, not only in finding God, but also in understanding the relation of a good God to the fact of evil. That religion trusts and loves God does not mean that it has to identify all that is with good. As a matter of fact, vital religion has always included a pessimistic note. The prophets trusted God as to the ultimate goal of history, but were very unpopular with their irreligious or merely nominally religious contemporaries precisely because they were so pessimistic about their own times. The doctrine of the Fall, and the myth that nature is now for a limited time in the hands of an evil power, are evidence of the ability of religious people to sense the tragedy of life. Trust and love of God may mean, then, that in spite of bitterly discouraging facts, God may be depended upon to do his part in bringing about salvation. Traditional religion has combined optimism and pessimism in a way foreign to modern culture. During the modern period we have tended toward an optimistic view, and theology has tried to show that this is the best of all possible worlds. Wherever

the tragic facts of experience have been reared into a philosophy the saving power which religious trust affords has been missing. By recognizing both the evil in nature and the grounds for faith in God, traditional religion brought together in a meaningful fashion these divergent types of experience. By failing to retain this insight, the modern world has found itself unhappily alternating between pessimism and optimism without finding a faith in which they can be understood as belonging in the same world.

There is no solution of the problem of evil which admits of verification. Indeed the problem appears in its most acute form only after we have transcended the realm of knowledge and have taken seriously that which we believe on faith. When religion places its faith in a God who can be trusted, who is absolutely good, and who at the same time has control of nature, then there is a mystery concerning the fact of evil and its continued resistance to all efforts to overcome it. Can God, we ask, be both good and powerful in the face of this situation? Within the framework of the argument presented in this book there is an easy reply to this query, though it is in no sense a persuasive theoretical solution of the problem. We have tried to show how much and how little about God we can actually know, while explaining also that it is legitimate to make an act of faith beyond knowledge. Since we do not know all that God is, why should we assume that we know any more about the ultimate nature of good and evil? If we go beyond experience and reason to postulate the existence of a God at the heart of nature who is worthy

of our complete trust, then why should we find a problem in the fact that we still experience what seems evil to our little selves? If we do not know all that God is, neither do we know what the divine good or the divine purpose is. Our difficulty with the problem of evil is particularly acute because we have made an act of faith. Ultimately the only way we can get out of the difficulty is also by an act of faith. To trust God is to trust him completely even though his ways seem strange to us. The God whom we worship is always, from one point of view, the Infinite Spirit in whom we live and move and have our being, in whose everlasting arms all things rest.

Unfortunately, we cannot remain content with this answer for the simple reason that we are valuing organisms and so find ourselves always making judgments of good and bad. The God whom we worship, to be really worshipful, must be wholly and completely good. Reflection of this sort shows us that God cannot be identified with the whole of things, because the whole contains both good and bad. A God who is worshipful is to be found only in the good. And certainly the God whom we serve in action is one who takes sides. The servant of God is a member of the army of righteousness which wages war against the forces of evil. Such considerations as these would suggest a fundamental duality in nature rather than a single-heartedness. But if this were the case God would always be confronted by an unconquerable foe, and so would not be one who could be absolutely depended upon to bring things to a desirable outcome. A satisfactory

solution would have to account for evil in such a way that God is absolved from the responsibility of creating it, and at the same time demonstrate that evil is not beyond God's control and is completely overcome.

It is not necessary for us to review all the ways in which philosophy and religion have gone about the task of finding a solution to this problem.[1] Most of the so-called solutions do, to be sure, have some plausibility because they appeal to ways in which we actually experience evil. For example, the duality referred to above is not true of all experience. What we call evil and good are often found to issue from the same set of conditions, rather than from two metaphysically opposed forces. This is particularly true of physical evil, that is, the type of evil which results from the conflict between sentient creatures on the one side and the forces of nature on the other. Men unquestionably find their purposes thwarted by countless stubborn physical facts, and they frequently undergo pain in the course of their conflict with them. Yet this does not mean that one part of nature is the source of evil and is completely different from another part of nature which accounts for good. Rather, it appears that nature, in so far as it is a scene of orderliness, is the source of both good and evil. It is manifestly a good thing that we can find something dependable and predictable about nature; otherwise we should not be able to make successful adjustments or find reliable means for realizing and making secure good purposes. But if nature

[1] For an illuminating and an extremely well-written account of this see R. A. Tsanoff, *The Nature of Evil,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1931.

is to be orderly in some respects, we expect and desire it to be orderly in these respects all the while and not shift its course merely because some sentient creatures get in its way and thereby suffer pain. In a similar fashion, whenever a human institution is called into being to meet some need or to correct some evil, we find inevitably that this same institution, even though it admirably serves certain purposes, will by its very nature issue in some new evil. We indubitably experience evil in these ways as a by-product of the same conditions which are necessary for the good, although we cannot rear a metaphysical solution on this experience alone. We should be guilty of begging the question if we should attempt a complete solution of the problem of evil by trying to demonstrate that pain is a necessary by-product of an order of things requisite for the emergence of higher goods.

Again, it is true that we often experience evil as the necessary part of a greater good. What at first appears as inexplicable and as independently evil, is later seen to be swallowed up as a necessary ingredient of good. Pain is frequently a condition of health, temptation and sin a part of the resultant moral character. Sometimes, too, there are novel goods which emerge from undeserved suffering, from evil which it certainly seems a reliable God could eliminate. Children born with an initial handicap of a defective brain, an evil resulting neither from their own nor from their parents' sins, present a problem for which there is no answer. Yet it is empirically true that while this evil always stands as an irremediable fact, it sometimes brings about a deep-

ening of the unselfishness in the character of the parents, or a stimulation of creativeness which becomes a new good to the world. But if we try to make these experiences basic for a theoretical solution we run into contradictions with which other experiences present us. On the one hand, there is experienced a tremendous amount of evil which is left over from the quantity necessary to become a part of greater good. On the other hand, we experience relatively "pure" goods whose existence does not depend upon the presence of evil. Health is no less health when it does not follow upon physical pain. Creative art may be just as great a good when it does not rise out of the anguish of undeserved suffering. Even ideal character can be such without the necessity of as much moral evil as we find in the world. Because we are frequently better off *after* having passed through the temptation to do evil, it does not follow that we are better off because of this experience. We call the later state good not merely because we have overcome the temptation, but because the achieved goodness has brought us nearer to the ideal. If it were the fighting of desires alone which constituted the good life, then the man who victoriously overcomes his good and generous desires would be as meritorious as he who suppresses all wrong. Surely the fight is worthy only when the victorious results bring us into a state of living which is closer to perfection. Strength of character, which may be largely the result of overcoming evil, is not in and of itself the only value. Strength of character is admirable

largely because it may serve as a means of moral rectitude.

Josiah Royce as well as any philosophical writer made the effort to recognize the real and tragic presence of evil in nature, and yet to argue that the world in its entirety is good because the greatest good is such that it must include evil elements. He made a splendid attempt to allow room for significant moral activity within a monistic philosophy and to meet the difficulties presented by the fact of evil in a more straightforward way than most idealists. He set himself the task of steering a course which would retain all the advantages of a monism and at the same time avoid the moral indifferentism of naturalism and the unwarranted optimism of those points of view which assert that all that exists is good, and that evil is mere appearance. Naturalism, too, has its way of denying the positive reality of evil. It accomplishes this by making relative both good and evil and denying metaphysical significance to either one. Most idealisms, on the other hand, try to dispose of evil by defining it as the mere negation or lack of good. But this lack has the appearance, at least, of a positive nature, and the appearance itself has to be accounted for. The good cannot be conceived as producing even the appearance of what is less good. There seems to be the necessity, then, of pointing to some other principle than good to account for the evil. And so again we seem to come upon a latent dualism. Royce, however, claims to have avoided these difficulties. He asserts, in the first place, that the world in its wholeness is perfect. All of the facts of temporal

existence considered as a totality in the eternal world make up the complete good. In the second place, evil is real. The fact of temporality is the principle which acounts for evil, but even in the eternal there are still traces of evil. In the eternal realm evil still exists, but only as something completely conquered and overcome. In this explanation Royce feels that he takes account of the tragic facts of life and yet demonstrates that the world in its entirety is perfect.

But a careful study of this or any other similar argument shows that it ends in the same dilemma with which it starts. Royce, in particular, has some beautiful passages in which the statement of his position is couched. When, however, we pierce through the rhetoric to the logic which underlies it, we find his theory is that the imperfection of the parts of the universe is consonant with the perfection of the whole. He inevitably gets into trouble because of the ambiguity involved in his use of the term "perfection." It is true that one way of viewing the perfection of the world is in no way affected by those facts which, from a different point of view, we call evil. That is, if we think of perfection as synonymous with explained systematic existence, or that all things in the universe are intelligible, this bears no necessary relation to the moral values of these same things. It is conceivable that we can find explanation in the constitution of nature for that which we call evil as well as for that which we call good. Good and evil are equally intelligible, equally consistent with the systematic character of the universe, and so evil does not invalidate the concept of universal

perfection. But Royce insists upon attributing to reality a perfection in which *all* of our purposes find fulfillment, whether they be intellectual or ethical.[2] This confusion of natural with moral perfection is inherent in the entire theory and it is only by making dim the distinction between the two by the use of noble phrases that the solution possesses even the semblance of plausibility. How can a God who includes everything be morally perfect when parts of him are morally imperfect? In a morally perfect world it is not sufficient that things be explained; they must be shown to be good in virtue of the fact that they find room for themselves within the perfect whole. The part must find its moral value in its congruity with the total moral order. If it is the case that the natural perfection of

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[2] Illustration of what I am saying here may be found in Royce's *The World and the Individual,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1899-1901, I, 377-378. Royce is dealing with the two ways in which we can view an evil fact. He has chosen the phenomenon of physical death as his example. "As a natural phenomenon its very prevalence is of deep rational interest. Meanwhile, it involves chemical and physical changes which are not essentially different from countless other changes going on in the same organic world. For science it therefore has the same sort of importance that any other event in the biological realm may come to have. On this side, one can say that death is definable as an objective fact rendering relatively true, in their own fragmentary degree, our ideas about death. And this one can say in the same sense as that in which one can make the assertion about any natural fact whatever. . . . . But death—and, above all, not our own death nearly so much as the death of our friends—is an evil in so far as it appears in our experience as a temporal defeat of the purposes of human love, and of the need of the human world for its good men. Well, this is the other, and, for our own theory, indeed, the more problematic aspect of death. For here the passing fragment of fact is that a given human purpose is so far defeated. And this fragment of fact, as we admit, is obviously somehow a part of the real—a fact of finite Being. And yet our theory asserts that what is, as such, fulfils purposes, and fulfills too the very purposes of our ideas."

the universe depends upon the intelligibility of the parts, then moral perfection must depend upon the parts having a moral purpose. If, on the one hand, evil exists in God *qua* evil, then God is not perfect. If, on the other hand, evil is merely the necessary and welcome condition of God's perfection, then God can have no moral value for us. We are in agony that God may have the peace which comes when pain is quieted. We experience the crushing blows of defeat that God may know the triumph. We sink to the degradation of moral evil that God may have a perfect moral life and consciousness. The peace, triumph, and moral perfection cannot be shared by us, for were we to know these the conditions of God's perfection would be removed. His peace depends upon our suffering, his triumph upon our defeat, his perfection upon our sin.

This is, in reality, the outcome of the argument we have been examining. Its absurdity is seen in the fact that it pictures not merely a God who is indifferent to evil but a universe which cannot be morally bad no matter how many sins we commit. But practical, ethical activity always proceeds on the assumption that the world is worse because of its evils and that the religious task is to remove them. A God to whose perfection evil and imperfection are necessary is quite as irrelevant to the moral ideal as a mechanical world which is indifferent to good and evil. Such a God appears to include all distinctions among values as mere differences among equally valuable facts.

The above discussion illustrates the fact that any treatment of the problem of evil which purports to

give a logical solution is really a case of treating only some of the experiences of evil as metaphysically real, and eventually it runs into difficulty in attempting to explain other experiences. Religious faith has these three postulates: the reality of evil; a good God who is not responsible for evil; a dependable God who controls nature and can be trusted ultimately to overcome evil. The point of view of traditional Christianity, while not a solution of the problem, at least has the merit of dramatizing vividly these three things. The doctrine of the Fall points to the reality of evil. That the Fall resulted from the misuse of freedom on the part of creatures absolves God from the responsibility of creating evil (even though God is responsible for creating beings possessing freedom). That there is to be a final defeat of evil means that God is trustworthy. Although this point of view is highly successful in expressing the nature of the problem I am not impressed by attempts to reclothe it in modern dress and turn it into a scientifically persuasive and logically consistent solution.[3]

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[3] N. P. Williams in his *The Ideas of the Fall and of Original Sin* (Longmans, Green & Co., London, 1927) has attempted to analyze these ideas in order that he might determine the irreducible minimum of the Christian doctrine. He has then tried to show how this irreducible minimum is at once the true solution of the problem of evil and compatible with modern knowledge. On pages 523-524 he writes: "To explain evil in nature, no less than in man, we are compelled to assume a Fall—a revolt against the will of the Creator, a declension from the beauty and glory which God stamped upon his work at the beginning. And, to account for the vast and intimate diffusion of evil, selfishness and hate amongst all the multitudinous tribes of living creatures we must place this Ultimate Fall (regarded as an event in Time) at a point before the differentiation of life into its present multiplicity of forms and the emergence of separate species. We must summon to our aid the great

When all is said, we must remember that whatever good is to be achieved, it is to be a good made possible by this and not some other world. The world is what it is partly in virtue of the character of its God. It is no less true that God is what he is partly in virtue of the nature of his world. This world is such that certain kinds of goods may be made secure. Let us not complain too much if other goods seem precarious. But our discussion has long since carried us beyond the problems of nature to the problems of value.

Where the scientist and the philosopher have to be silent, the artist, poet, and prophet may still speak to us; indeed, this is their truest realm. What can no longer be stated in the ingenious phrases of human wisdom, may still be brought home to the sensitive spirit by the language of religious inspiration, art, and, above all, music; to such an extent that we may well be in doubt which way brings us nearest the root of the matter. This revelation reaches its higest and purest degree when all three speak together, when the poet's gift comes to the help of the prophet, and both are brought by the language of music to a degree of expression infinitely beyond mere words.[4]

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conception first elaborated by the Stoics under the title of the 'Logos Spermatikos' or 'seminal reason,' and more recently formulated, in the light of modern biological conceptions, by M. Bergson under the name of the *élan vital,* the Life-Force which is the immediate ground of our own being as of that of all the multitudinous creatures of the universe. If we can assume that there was a precosmic vitiation of the whole Life-Force, when it was still one and simple, at a point of time prior to its bifurcation and ramification into a manifold of distinct individuals or entelechies, we shall be in possession of a conception which should explain, so far as explanation is possible, the continuity and homogeneity of evil throughout all ranks of organized life from the bacillus up to man."

[4] Bernhard Bavink, *The Natural Sciences,* D. Appleton-Century Co., New York, 1932, p. 609.

CHAPTER SEVEN

GOD AND VALUE

I

Considerations of value are of particular importance for religion. What we may call value theology, however, as compared with natural theology, is a rather recent development. We can understand this because cosmology has had a long history, whereas serious attention to value as a special type of philosophical inquiry is hardly more than a century old. Today, nevertheless, the problem of value ranks as one of the more important branches of philosophy and it has become central in theology. Ritschl was especially influential in focusing the attention of theology on the problem of value. Taking as his starting point the Kantian distinction between knowledge and faith, he made a sharp contrast between theoretical judgments and value judgments. He maintained that only the latter have any place in theology and that they constitute a method altogether different from the one employed by science or metaphysics. Science is concerned with theoretical judgments, that is, more or less disinterested statements about the nature of objects as they exist in and of themselves. But "religious knowledge moves in

independent value-judgments, which relate to man's attitude toward the world, and call forth feelings of pleasure or pain, in which man either enjoys the dominion over the world vouchsafed him by God, or feels grievously the lack of God's help to that end." [1]

Current definitions of religion reflect the enormous influence of this point of view. Religion is frequently treated as though it were entirely a value-appreciating, a value-seeking, and a value-conserving process. A question which arises in this connection is the relation of God and value. If religious judgments are value judgments only, it would seem that we give the name of God to whatever we take to be the highest value. We discovered in the previous chapter that in natural theology our arguments for the existence of God and our ideas as to the nature of God are determined by what we assume to be basic among the various ways in which we experience nature. Here, it seems, the idea of God is dependent upon what we believe to be of greatest value. The nature of God would have an intimate relation to human desires, interests, and ideals, and our idea of God would change as our ideals change. In this case God is not a Being; it is a name we give to our present supreme value, whether it be patriotism, scholarship, pleasure, material riches, or social harmony. God is nothing more than a fiction created in the image of human desires. If God is more than this, and at the same time equated with value, then we must assume that there is some meaning in the notion of

[1] *The Christian Doctrine of Justification and Reconciliation,* Eng. trans., Edinburgh, 1902, 2d ed., III, 205.

objective value; that is, we should have to view value as something other than human valuing. The objects of our quest would be values which are quite as definitely a part of the structure of the universe as facts are. When we make value judgments we may be correct or in error about true value just as we may make true or false judgments about matters of fact. This point of view gives us a God who is independent of human wishes and who stands in judgment upon our present ideals. But if we were to follow this route to the knowledge of God we should require a method of knowing that objective values exist and what those values are. Having chosen to define knowledge after the fashion of experimentalism, it is clear that I cannot "know" either of these. Without attempting a thorough review of all the theories of value which philosophy has presented, we shall consider a few aspects of the general problem in forming the basis of this phase of our theological method.

II

As contrasted with facts, values are usually thought of as subjective and relative, and there is ample justification for this notion. It is reasonable to assume that facts are what they are and remain altogether indifferent to our judgments about them. But value appears to arise only when some person takes an attitude toward an object. Although the value is projected upon the object it has an inescapable relation to the person's likings, needs, and purposes. Unless the object has some value for a person it has no value at all. This

distinction bears a close relation to the Ritschlian contrast between theoretical and value judgments, although Ritschl claimed for the latter their own type of certainty and validity. He realized also that it is necessary to qualify the statement that theoretical judgments are disinterested. "For without interest we do not trouble ourselves about anything." [2] The subjectivity of values as opposed to the objectivity of facts is found more clearly stated in Professor R. B. Perry's philosophy. Although he has a realistic theory of knowledge, Perry says that an object does not *have* value; it "acquires value when any interest, whatever it be, is taken in it; just as anything whatsoever becomes a target when anyone whosoever aims at it." [3] Perry quotes with approval a passage from Santayana which contains a similiar view:

Apart from ourselves, and our human bias, we can see in such a mechanical world no element of value whatever. In removing consciousness, we have removed the possibility of worth. But it is not only in the absence of all consciousness that value would be removed from the world; by a less violent abstraction from the totality of human experience, we might conceive beings of a purely intellectual cast, minds in which the transformations of nature were mirrored without any emotion. . . . . No event would be repulsive, no situation terrible. . . . . In this case, as completely as if consciousness were absent altogether, all value and excellence would be gone. . . . . Values spring

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[2] *Ibid.*, III, 204.

[3] R. B. Perry, *General Theory of Value*, Longmans, Green & Co., New York, 1926, pp. 115-116.

from the immediate and inexplicable reaction of vital impulse, and from the irrational part of our nature. . . . . The ideal of rationality itself is as arbitrary, as much dependent on the needs of finite organization, as any other.[4]

Here we have a position which finds it conceivable that there is a world of nature which exists antecedent to the attempts of scientific and philosophical procedures to know it, a nature devoid of all value as such, but acquiring value in virtue of human interest and human bias. It is hard to imagine any sharper contrast between the objectivity of a world of fact and the subjectivity of the world of value.

If value is conferred upon an object whenever someone takes an interest in it, all objects may have value. Any one object, however, may excite the interest of some people and not of others. Even among those who do take an interest in a given object there may be a variety of ways in which they value it. For some it may have a positive and for others a negative value. But religion is concerned with finding a supreme value which ought to be recognized and to which loyalty ought to be given. The subjective theory under discussion does not seem to lend itself readily to such an interpretation. If there are things which appear to carry their values as intrinsic to their very nature, we must not forget that this situation is the result of a process in which things happened to be repeatedly valued in much the same fashion. That truth is looked upon as intrinsically valuable, or that some work of

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[4] *The Sense of Beauty,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1899, pp. 17-18.

art is regarded as a masterpiece, means that there has been wide agreement among valuing subjects rather than that value inheres in these things apart from being valued. This obviously is one way in which we seem to come upon what is considered "objective" in the area of value. It is certainly the case that some values do come to be thought of as absolute and frequently as peculiarly divine. But if God is to be equated with such values it means that he is a name for those ideals which happen to be widely held in a given period of the history of a culture. So far as religion fosters devotion to God taken in this sense it may be considered socially useful from a conservative point of view and socially harmful from a radical point of view. Among the values which come to play the role of absolutes may be certain matters of personal morality, forms of social organization, or political ideals. Religion would serve the purpose of entrenching these by claiming that they are part of the very nature of God. But in the course of time there may be changed conditions and the emergence of new purposes relative to which the older values become negative. In this case religion would be guilty of supporting what might very well be considered injustice by a large number of people. It is apparent that such a view of religion and the religious object is unsatisfactory.

There is another way in which the interest theory of value is retained along with the notion that some value is supreme. The greatest value is sometimes defined as inclusiveness, that is, a system in which the largest possible number of interests are brought into harmony.

In this situation specific values are not lost but actually enhanced by mutual support. The supreme value, then, is that of inclusiveness, the systematic harmonizing of as many interests as possible. The statement of a position similar to this is found among the writings of Professor Wieman. For him the highest value is "some system which includes the greatest number and diversity of enjoyments but adjusts them to one another. . . . . Ideally it would make all experiences enjoyable even when painful, because of the recognized function which such painful experience might have in sustaining a total system of value." [5] If this is the highest value, then God may be defined as that "structure of supreme value viewed as a possibility of existence, and also that kind of process in nature which most nearly approximates this order of supreme value and promotes further approximations to it. Thus God is both the most beneficent actuality and the supreme ideal." [6]

If this position rests upon the assumption that inclusiveness is objectively that supreme value which ought to be recognized because it is capable of being demonstrated as such, it is necessary to point out that the assumption is unwarranted. Inclusiveness, like any other value, is dependent upon persons who take an interest in it. It is conceivable that we might be interested in promoting certain values with the deliberate intention of sacrificing others. If, on the other hand, it

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[5] "God and Value," in *Religious Realism,* ed. by D. C. Macintosh, Macmillan Co., New York, 1931, pp. 161, 162-163.

[6] *Ibid.,* p. 175.

is assumed that, although inclusiveness is not the self-evident supreme value it is nevertheless so desirable that people can be persuaded so to honor it, we must again disagree. Harmonizing values in some situations is neither possible nor desirable. We must remember that when a specific value is adjusted to others in an inclusive system it frequently passes through profound alterations. One is reminded here of a philosophical dispute between two types of absolute idealism—Royce's and Bosanquet's, for example. Royce argues that the Absolute is a systematic and harmonious affair in which the experiences of the temporal order, even when viewed as an "eternal now," are unaltered in passing from time to eternity. Bosanquet, on the other hand, shows that there must be a change in events as finite beings experience them when they pass into the Absolute consciousness. He quite correctly points out that a succession of events cannot remain,

> in actual content, within a longer span of consciousness, what they were, or could be, within a shorter. A man passes, say, four hours in misery because he fancies that a friend has taken offence at some act of his. At the end of the four hours he becomes aware that he was mistaken, and his distress is dispelled. If the later contents act on the earlier within the same specious present of the longer span of consciousness, in the same way as they do within the shorter specious present of ordinary consciousness, the four hours' interval of distress must for such a consciousness cease to exist as such. It cannot help being

transformed, and turned, on the whole, to a feeling partaking of gladness.[7]

So in the field of value, there is bound to be a change in particular values as they become parts of an inclusive system.

Far from being absolute, the ideal of inclusiveness is undoubtedly in part the reflection of the liberal faith in compromise. But analysis of the social situation renders very dubious the possibility of making harmony of interests itself the criterion of the greatest value. In any attempt at harmony some interests must be sacrificed and others radically altered. Always there is one set of values which is peculiarly dominant and to which others must be subordinated. So long as the bourgeoisie retain superior economic and political power they possess effective means of controlling situations in the interest of what appears valuable to them. Harmony may involve some concessions on their part, but on the whole it will be achieved at the expense of those values peculiar to the proletariat. Situations may arise in which the security of the values of those lacking political power may be had only by sacrificing the value of harmony and inclusiveness.

There is, of course, a widely held assumption that what we want is order and social stability. The political state has as its great purpose the maintaining of this order. But it is quite possible that groups may at times want some things more than they want order, and therefore will be quite willing to dispense with the lat-

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[7] *The Principle of Individuality and Value*, Macmillan Co., London, 1912, pp. 387-388.

ter. The social stability which the state maintains at any one time is actually a certain system of class relations. So long as the maintenance of these relations meets the test of providing the external conditions of good life, there will be general agreement in the desire for law and order. Whatever conflicts occur between groups may be satisfactorily ironed out by the method of compromise. In the course of the historic process, however, new situations may arise which, in the opinion of certain groups, render the existing set of class relations incapable of providing for them the external conditions of good life. They believe that such conditions are potentially present in the society of which they are a part but that full realization of them is hindered by the very order which the state maintains. If the state were to attempt a fundamental change in the system of class relations, there would surely be violent opposition on the part of the stronger groups whose values are best conserved by the older order. If the state continues as the will of the strong, then those who feel themselves oppressed have a feeling of moral obligation to be violently disloyal to the state and to the supposed harmony of interests which it represents. If religion were to make inclusiveness of interests a divine value it might very well, in this situation, be a party to furthering the oppression of the weak. My point is that even though we admit the desirability of harmony, order, and the inclusion of as many interests as possible in the order, inclusiveness cannot be made the supreme criterion without reference to those particular values which are to be domi-

nant in any system. It is doubtful, too, whether this point of view could ever do justice to the experienced conflict among values, and the tragic sacrifice of some actual and potential values when others are realized. Although supreme value is indubitably a criterion of the divine, it is unsatisfactory to identify the highest value with merely subjective desires, or with the socially shared ideals of a particular culture, or with the systematic inclusiveness of as many interests as possible.

III

The discussion to this point has proceeded upon the idea that facts and values are fundamentally different.[8] From another point of view they are seen as having many similiarities. Objects as known and talked about are themselves constituted by the process of knowing. Facts are things at which we arrive by the method of inquiry, and inquiry always involves purposes. Thus all facts which become the objects of discussion have some of the characteristics of value. On the other hand, values are not without roots in nature. Genuine ideals are always supported by and applicable to real existence. F. C. S. Schiller goes so far as to say that "the opposition between value and fact breaks down. 'Facts' are themselves values, values established in the endeavor to analyze out the factor of givenness concontained in experience and presupposing purposive

[8] This reference is chiefly to Ritschl on the one hand, and to Perry and Santayana on the other. I do not mean to refer to the whole of Wieman's theory of value in this connection.

manipulation of apparent 'facts.' "[9] The opposition is profound only when we hold to the theory that knowledge is the disclosure by the intellect of an antecedent reality, and that values are hopelessly subjective because linked with human preferences and desires. But when we see that knowledge is itself a practical activity and that objects of knowledge are those things which emerge at the end of a process of inquiry, then the supposed opposition between fact and value becomes artificial.

In a sense, the relative disinterestedness of scientific procedure is itself a value. The ends which the scientist has in view can best be served by eliminating so far as possible personal wishes or prejudices. Value refers to other things than those qualities which objects acquire whenever someone takes an interest in them. It may also mean any object, situation, or activity which contributes to a desirable end. Here is an area in which scientific method can discover values. Given a certain end, the means which contribute thereto can be investigated and their validity tested. And yet there does seem to be a distinction even here between facts and values. So far as facts are concerned, it is simply the case that certain means are the necessary condition for the preservation of the life of a person seriously ill. These means are also positive values so long as the preservation of the life is desirable. However, if the end is not desirable then the means also

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[9] Article on "Value" in Hastings' *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, XII, 589.

cease to have positive value, even though the factual situation remains unaltered.

In discussing the difference between the realistic and the experimental statements of the meaning of natural knowledge we found that it appeared reasonable to postulate the existence of a real nature which gives rise to our various experiences and which to some extent controls our interpretations. The question now occurs as to whether we should not do the same thing concerning values. Granting the subjectivity and relativity of values, is it reasonable to assume the existence of a real value situation which ideally stands as the criterion of the validity of human value judgments? This may prove a fruitful line of investigation, but we must first recognize that the similarity between facts and values is somewhat dubious. Ordinary common sense, as well as an examination of the pragmatic account of knowledge, makes necessary the belief in the existence of facts regardless of whether or not persons attempt to know them. At first sight there appears to be no analogous situation regarding values. The latter are more obviously dependent upon valuing subjects. Furthermore, ideals are by definition not merely actual but also potential. They may or they may not be realized. They are of the nature of what ought to be rather than what is. However, it has been argued that norms, imperatives, values, are in their own way just as objective as facts. If such a position could be maintained successfully, we should be able to find a God of value who really exists.

IV

We have already pointed out that we must distinguish between facts in the sense of what we take to be the case and facts in the sense of whatever is the case. Some thinkers [10] have argued that we must make this same distinction in the realms of logic and value. The following summary of Max Scheler's position is an excellent illustration:

For Scheler the problem is that of showing the freedom of values from empirical considerations without making them formal. He argues that a philosophy of ethics can have no historical, psychological, or biological basis, but that all experience of good and evil presupposes a knowledge, founded on a phenomenological intuition of essences, of what good and evil are in themselves. Moral values must be a priori yet material. This is possible since the a priori is not, as Kant would have it, the formal, but rather, the intuitively perceivable as that which necessarily must be so. A proposition is a priori true only because the data with which it deals are a priori given. But these material data of ethics are apprehended, without symbolism or other mediation, as themselves evident. Even the senses are less sure than this. We have been so largely dependent upon sense-experience, Scheler thinks, because we have asked, "What can be given?" instead of the simpler question, "What is given?" Even in ordinary life what is given is the experience of the thing itself, not the opaqueness of a part of it in our present perspective, nor its appearance under present conditions, nor even its sense-data. These are the results of later analysis. Only by

[10] Notably the German phenomenologists.

believing that the object is itself given can we understand the meaning of thing, power, movement, similarity, and also value. Values have an a priori order of their own independent of any intellectual construction or empirical observation—an order which Scheler takes great pains to analyze, and which he believes should be clear when we have sufficiently purified our insights. Loving and hating refer to an order which is as little dependent upon the specifically human realm as is logic itself.[11]

Here is a theory which makes values absolute, and claims to offer a means of having certain knowledge of them. Theological method would be that of analyzing the religious values, the holy, for example, and so arrive at a definite knowledge of a God who is not the product of human wishes. Unfortunately, the theory presents some serious difficulties. For one thing, it involves the rejection of empiricism and the substitution of the reliance upon a disciplined intuition. I fail to see how this can result in anything but confusion. Knowledge must involve concepts, interpretations of experience, making predictions and verifying them. To assume that there is knowledge of essences which is gained entirely from the given without reference to consequences is to sacrifice a meaningful use of the term "knowledge" for the purpose of having absolute certainty. There are, to be sure, qualitative characteristics of what is given, and these are immediately intuited in a single experience. But it seems to me these are what we mean by the subjective. Knowl-

[11] J. S. Bixler, "Can Religion Become Empirical?" in *The Nature of Religious Experience,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1937, p. 82.

edge has to do not with these, but with judgments about that which goes beyond a single experience, thus involving prediction and empirical verification.

Another difficulty arises in connection with the use of the a priori. It is perfectly true that when we call anything "good" this attribution is not solely a part of the given experience. There is already present some notion of what the good is before we can so characterize an object, an act, or a situation. An important problem which any reflective person faces is that of making more precise his definition of a priori concepts, whether in the field of value or elsewhere. These are always *involved* in the knowledge situation, but the question is whether they are, of themselves, knowledge. In the Kantian philosophy the a priori concepts had nothing to do with the objective world, but were parts of the human intellectual structure and dictated the ways in which all men *must* categorize their experiences. But it now seems clear that what Kant thought was necessary and eternal was really a part of the Newtonian science and world-view. The space and time which he said were forms of perception were Euclidian space and time. Now we characterize the space-time order in a non-Euclidian way. The categories of the understanding which were so important for Kant, particularly substance and causality, are also being questioned. A more or less successful attempt is being made to get along without using the category of substance at all. The result of modern scientific investigation suggests that whatever can be said about the processes which are studied depends solely upon the form of the processes

without reference to the substance, or to the nature of the "that," in which the processes take place. The a priori is not an eternal structure of the human mind. While concepts are a priori relative to this or that experience, they nevertheless do change in the course of experience, especially social experience.

The phenomenologists reject the Kantian position only to make even greater claims for the a priori. They reject the notion that the a priori is merely formal. But if it does give us access to the objectively real there is no way of determining when our concepts are true. In ordinary processes of knowing it would seem that the a priori is of the nature of definitions or concepts which are mind-made, which always have something of the arbitrary about them, which are connected with the purposes we pursue, which may change in the course of time, and which are employed in investigation and interpretation. This is the situation in science, and I see no reason to believe that we can have *greater* certainty in the realm of value.

Finally, Scheler does call attention to an important aspect of the value problem although the notion of "essence" is to be rejected. We have already referred to value as a quality which an object acquires when someone takes an interest in it. We have also seen that means to desirable ends are values. Now it is pointed out that value may mean that immediate feeling of satisfaction, that complete enjoyment of a present experience, which is an end in itself and does not get its value from the fact that it leads to something further. If we take this sort of experience and combine it, as

Professor C. I. Lewis suggests, with the false supposition "that there are some concepts at least which denote 'simple qualities'—something which can be directly exhibited in a single experience," then we can see how the phenomenologists "arrive at the erroneous conclusion that there is a kind of cognitive apprehension—of simple qualities or essences—which terminates directly in the given." [12] That there are end values in the sense of immediate experiences few would deny. But these experiences are not cognitive. They are simply had and enjoyed. Judgments are not made about them and it is meaningless to raise the question as to whether they are true or false values. All of us have had such moments of appreciation which are both immediate and final. They are those precious experiences which we cherish and whose value is not a matter of dispute. The value is intrinsic because the experience itself *is* the value. But to make this a cognitive experience or to assume that it is revelatory of an independent realm of objective value is to lead to confusion. Judgments which can be made and which can be verified have nothing whatever to do with the question as to whether value is experienced. Judgments are concerned with such things as the means for prolonging the value experience or for issuing in its repetition. Here only is there a meaning to truth and error. If we make a prediction that a certain course of behavior will result in a given value experience, we have a means of determining whether or not the prediction is accurate. We are

[12] *Mind and the World Order,* Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929, p. 120.

not judging the truth or falsity of the value experience itself.

Our search for known objective values does not appear to be successful. The nearest thing to objectivity we have discovered is in the area of instrumental values. If we are agreed upon the desirability of a given end then we can carry on a fruitful discussion and investigation of the best means of attaining it. These means are values, and we can test their validity in terms of their success in leading to the stated goal. This is, of course, a matter of objective relativism. The means are ultimately valuable only when the ends to which they lead are valuable.

V

Our purpose is to see what light our knowledge of values can throw on the existence and nature of God. We are assuming that what we mean by God is, among other things, that which we regard as our highest ideal or purpose, or a Being possessing supreme value. Just as we tried to see what success we might have in knowing the Being which controls nature, so here we should like to find some way of knowing that there is a supreme value and of discovering what it is and how it is related to our own lives. We began with the commonly accepted distinction between value and fact and, proceeding on the assumption that the former is always related to human interest, desire, and enjoyment, raised the question as to why there are some things which appear to be objectively or intrinsically valuable. One explanation was that the so-called intrinsically valuable

things are really things which have happened to be valued repeatedly in the same way by a large number of people. However, such values are frequently "universal" only for people within a given culture at a given period of history. To assume that these values are divine is to make religion a bulwark of conservatism and to identify God with some past structure of society or morality when changed conditions have introduced new values. This is indeed a warning that social agreement is not a pathway to legitimate certainty concerning that supreme value we acknowledge as God. Again, we found it unsatisfactory to take as absolute the ideal of including as many interests as possible and adjusting them to one another. The ideal of inclusiveness may be quite as relative to human interest and bias as is any other value. Without reference to which particular values are to be dominant within a system the ideal of inclusiveness is all but meaningless as a criterion of what is supremely desirable.

We then questioned the validity of the original distinction between fact and value. We found that there are those who argue that just as we must distinguish between what we think to be the facts and what the facts are in and of themselves, so we must distinguish between our valuations and values as they really are. But the particular argument which we took as an illustration of this point of view was disappointing for reasons already given. That which was assumed to be the revelation of an objective value situation turned out to be highly subjective indeed. The only values we can know are instrumental in character, and we can know

these only in relation to clearly stated purposes which again seem to depend upon human desires. It is a mistake, I believe, to assume that there is a way of knowing the supreme value prior to a faith in God. We do not know the character of God because we know what ultimate values are. We know the values in virtue of God's revelation.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THEOLOGY AND THE SOCIAL PROBLEM

I

The early church was the representative of a new religion in an ancient culture. The Roman world was the scene of many rival religions among which there existed, nevertheless, a high degree of mutual tolerance. Imperial worship made no claim to the exclusive allegiance of men, and the state even protected the several varieties of religious organization. The genius of Christianity lay both in its universalism and in its setting of limits to tolerance. Freed from the racialism of Judaism, Christ became not only the Messiah but the Logos and the Redeemer as well. The varied expressions of religious needs and quests could be met by a developing Christianity which rapidly adjusted itself to the Greco-Roman world. But the power of this religion was enhanced by its insistence upon the uniqueness of Christ. Christians refused to allow their Saviour to be classified merely as one more mystery-god or one more officially recognized deity. It was this fact which transformed the religious situation from that of a group of rival cults into an opposition between the Christian Church on the one side and the pagan

religions unified by Neoplatonic philosophy on the other side. The combination of universalism and particularity was an important factor in the triumph of Christianity in the ancient world. Doctrine was adjusted to the best insights of pagan philosophy but not at the cost of losing the distinctiveness of the Christian message.

The position of the Western Church during the Middle Ages was determined by the fact that Christianity was by that time a well-established and well-organized religion in a young culture. Religious groups had been active in the process of civilizing the European races, and the Church was the one institution surviving the ancient world which continued to command respect. Education, letters, and art were under ecclesiastical control. Even the political power of the Church had been increased by its administrative achievements following the fall of Rome under the barbarian invasions. In his *City of God* Augustine answered the charge that the turning of Rome to the Christian God had been responsibe for its downfall. After pointing out the impotence of the older pagan gods, Augustine criticized the Roman weaknesses which were the real causes of the tragic end of the empire, and he argued that even the secular values of the ancient world could be preserved only through submission to the Church and its government. In spite of the wide influence and power of the medieval Church it was characteristic of the West to make a distinction between civil and ecclesiastical authority. That the respective functions of pope and emperor could not be defined

with complete satisfaction accounts for the perpetual struggle between church and state during this period. In spite of conflict among these powers there was such unity in medieval society that church and state could very well be thought of as two aspects of God's government of the world. It seemed that the ideal Church Universal had actual historical embodiment.

With the dissolution of the medieval world a pluralism, both in fact and in theory, replaced the older ideal of a unitary society. There were three phases of this pluralism which were important in shaping the concept of the Church. In the first place, the single political society was broken into independent and autonomous national states. Autonomy was possible only on condition of complete freedom from any international organization which might exert political influence. So far as the Protestant Reformation served to undermine papal authority it was an aid to the development of nationalism. But this meant also the loss of an actual Universal Church and the substitution of churches having definite national connections. In the second place, Protestantism was unable to avoid an almost endless process of division into sects of one sort and another. Thus there was even more plurality within Christendom than was occasioned by the rise of national states. Finally, when the ideal of democracy replaced absolutism, there was added a new meaning to pluralism even within the individual nation. No longer did the state claim the right to control all areas of life. The state was merely one way in which the people living in a given territory organized themselves.

The Church, or churches, were other types of organization, while business, art, education, and literature each enjoyed a considerable independence.

It is necessary to see the essential features of the position of the Church in the various periods of its history in order to get a perspective from which to view the present situation. Recently there has been a reversal of the direction of modern history so that now we seem to be moving away from pluralism within the nation. Pluralism at the international level is, of course, a chief cause of present tension. The communist philosophy has set the proletarian revolution as the ultimate goal of history and the classless society as the ultimate ideal to be achieved. Dialectical materialism is the revealed truth, and all phases of culture are to be subordinated to proletarian dictatorship. Communism explicitly puts a secular view of human life and destiny in opposition to Christianity, and sees the Church as an institution which may be a dangerous rival in claiming the loyalty of men and women. Education, art and letters must reflect communist principles only. But the Marxian interpretation of history has caused many Christians to examine more closely the position of the Church in capitalistic democracies. The pluralism which appears on the surface is, after all, not very profound. There is actually a subtle but pervasive influence emanating from the ruling economic class which has made the Church, the press, and education the servants of an almost autonomous capitalistic culture.

The rise of the totalitarian state is even more ob-

viously a reversal of pluralism. The totalitarian state openly declares its right and its intention to control the whole of human life and to make the state itself an object possessing supreme value. Not only does the state find a dangerous rival in the traditional Christian idea that a universal God is the only being worthy of absolute allegiance, it also substitutes the prime reality of race for the Christian ideal of universal brotherhood.

These factors have created in the modern world a situation in which the Christian Church feels the imperative need of overcoming its internal pluralism in order to make more effective its defense against the threatening forces of destruction. There appears to be once again the visible sign of a struggle between secularism and Christianity. Hence the importance of the contemporary ecumenical movement, and also the danger of a return to ecclesiastical authoritarianism. If American theology can learn something of the importance of tradition from Europe, it may be that European theology can gain something from the liberal temper of America. Perhaps the most important contribution American Christians can make is that of insisting on the abiding values of liberalism in this day of tension. Dean Shirley Jackson Case wisely warns us that

> what one may fear most in this trend toward the restoration of institutional authority is its depreciation of liberalism. It may be very true that the temper of liberalism does not readily lend itself to dogmatic assertions of positive convictions and the enforcement of authoritarian teaching and action. It is not surprising that in times of

great stress we should become distrustful of the tolerant and slow educational processes by which liberalism seeks to accomplish results. But to implement for righteousness the democratic will calls for more enduring and strenuous effort than does blind submission to dictatorial powers of a creed or an institution. The liberal believes that even God chooses to tutor rather than drive mankind in the ways of virtue. Superimposed compulsion of any sort in religion is at best only a temporary expedient.[1]

At the same time there is the practical necessity of finding sufficient unity to make effective the preaching of the irreducible minimum of the Christian faith—that is, the universal fatherhood of God and the universal brotherhood of man—against the false notions of tribal gods and primacy of race. Religion in our day is compelled by circumstances to face the social problem.

II

In American Protestantism there has appeared to be little connection between theology and social issues. Religious philosophies have seemed to center their interest on either one or the other, rather than seeing them as parts of a single religious outlook. Thus Professor E. A. Burtt raises the question:

> Which is really central in religion—the true foundation of theology and the basis of church unity—ultimate metaphysical belief or a common social ideal? Does the heart of religion lie in some theory as to the nature of the uni-

[1] Review of the books in the Oxford Conference Series, *Journal of Religion*, XIX, 180-181.

verse, which must be held by all church members if they are to have a sense of significant community with each other, or are metaphysical convictions subordinate to agreement on a fundamental ethical principle or general goal of social progress? [2]

This question suggests that there is a choice between making theological considerations or ethical considerations the fundamental factor, and that there is no necessary relation between them. We can see how this assumption is partially justified, because what is ordinarily thought of as theology has been the monopoly of a conservatism in which little interest was shown in the problems of society. On the other hand, religious groups which believed that Christianity had contributions of ethical idealism to make to the economic and political order were impatient with wasting time on theology. It is perfectly evident, however, that social religion which is divorced from systematic formulation of the Christian faith soon becomes indistinguishable from secular liberalism or secular radicalism.

Walter Rauschenbusch, whose name stands out among those identified with the social gospel, saw the need of theology. "We have a social gospel," he wrote. "We need a systematic theology large enough to match it and vital enough to back it." [3] Concerning the preparation of papers for the Oxford Conference, J. H. Oldham makes this significant observation: the "statement

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[2] *Types of Religious Philosophy,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1939, pp. 486-487.

[3] *A Theology for the Social Gospel,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1917, p. 1.

. . . . that perhaps the chief need of the Church today to equip it for fulfillment of its mission to society is a theology . . . . provoked much comment. The laymen who commented on the paper seized almost without exception on the statement with avidity and expressed their warm agreement." [4] The Catholic theologians have consistently assumed that there is a theology of politics as well as a philosophy of politics, and European Protestants and Catholics alike are today forced by circumstances to work out a political theology.

Those of us who are products of American liberal Christianity no longer have any doubt about the fact that our religion has social implications, but we are still confused as to what these implications are. We have not yet found an adequate theology which makes the Christian ethic relevant to modern problems and which at the same time gives to this ethic a content independent of the presuppositions of capitalist society. Democratic and liberal ideals have become for us so closely associated with the essentials of religion that reform means the process of making these ideals more thoroughly expressed in the actual structure of society. Liberal social Christianity rests upon the optimistic hope that the basic structure and ideals of modern culture are eternally valuable and are capable of an indefinite life span if proper reforms are introduced. In the face of a more pessimistic attitude toward the survival of Western civilization, liberal Christianity has no resources with which to mitigate despair or to offer

[4] W. A. Visser t'Hooft and J. H. Oldham, *The Church and Its Function in Society*, Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1937, p. 150.

hope in the ultimate meaningfulness of life. Without an adequate theology, religion is hardly more than the idealistic expression of a temporal society, and in the eyes of many this idealism becomes disgusting sentimentalism in times of stress.

> The culture of modernity was the artifact of modern civilization, product of its unique and characteristic conditions, and it is therefore not surprising that its minarets of the spirit should fall when the material foundations of its civilization begin to crumble. Its optimism had no more foundation than the expansive mood of the era of triumphant capitalism and naturally gives way to confusion and despair when the material conditions of life are seriously altered.[5]

In spite of the vital and significant influence of the social gospel, it is still difficult for Protestantism to overcome the prejudice that groups have no moral qualities of their own apart from the character of individuals. The individualism and sectarianism of Protestant Christianity were the natural consequences of the dominant nominalistic philosophy of the modern world, and all this led to the notion that social morality is merely a name applied to the morality of a number of persons. Apart from individual conduct social behavior was thought to be either unmoral—"business is business" and "politics is politics"—or completely dependent upon the personal character of the individuals involved. That this notion is still very much alive is

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[5] Reinhold Niebuhr, *An Interpretation of Christian Ethics,* Harper & Bros., New York, 1935, p. 3.

demonstrated by the program of the Oxford Group Movement, an unambiguous expression of nominalism.

The very foundation of the American nation reflected this point of view. H. L. Mencken has cynically ventured the guess that religion was omitted from serious consideration in the founding of the republic because of the superior wisdom of the responsible leaders or because of the superior quality of liquor which they drank. Actually, the chief ends which these men had in view were economic individualism and political self-determination, and the assumptions of the period were that economics and politics should be quite free from any religious restraint. It was a secular age so far as institutional life was concerned even though a large number of individuals were under a powerful religious influence. Thus it came about that religion in America concentrated its attention on the supervision of personal morals. This fact has had a bearing even on the formulation of the social gospel.

The eighteenth-century rejection of the doctrine of original sin in favor of a more optimistic view of man's nature was ultilized by liberal Christianity as a basis for the program of Christian nurture. A wise and kindly educational procedure was relied upon to produce men and women among whom would exist a friendly cooperation approximating the Christian ideal of love. Man was no longer called upon to renounce the world in order to achieve salvation; rather, he was educated and persuaded to apply the law of love to his personal relationships within the world. Liberal Christianity carried this idea into the area of social problems. It

has supposed that the love principle can actually be applied as a practical and workable norm in the dispute between capital and labor, or in international organization. It has failed to see that although the selfishness of individual men can be mitigated to a large extent by the ideal of love in intimate personal relationships, the possibility of this occurring in industrial or international relations is extremely remote. Reinhold Niebuhr has analyzed this contrast in some detail in his *Moral Man and Immoral Society*. What I am concerned to point out here is that the confusion results not only from a sentimental optimism, but also from the fact that liberalism carried into its social thinking a decided influence from the older nominalism. Psychoanalysis reveals how much of the individual's behavior is ruled by irrational and selfish motives even when he thinks he is acting on rational and altruistic principles. These irrational forces are also present in social behavior, and present even in more destructive forms. Paul Tillich has made an important contribution in calling attention to these "demonic" factors which bourgeois man did his best to cover up because of his desire to exert a complete and rational control over his world.[6]

So far as the Christian ideal of the worth of personality found expression in modern democratic society, religion is completely justified in identifying its interests with democracy. But a specific social order always embodies an ideal in ways which involve evil factors,

[6] *The Interpretation of History*, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936, pp. 77-122.

and unless religion has some way of maintaining an independent point of view it may fall into the fallacy of supporting the whole of a particular order, the evil along with the good. For example, a type of English Protestantism played an important part in the social revolution of the seventeenth century. By insisting upon the freedom of the individual conscience and by giving a sense of moral worth to the common man it definitely added to the power of those classes in English society which were struggling for what they deemed their rights. It is quite natural that this Protestantism came to identify the claims of the rising classes with good and the resistance of the older regime with evil. But it was also this Protestantism which took strong root on American soil, and it was on American soil where the middle class enjoyed its greatest prestige and power. At the close of his balanced and cautious chapter on "Religion and American Capitalism," T. C. Hall writes that "about all one is really justified in concluding is: that the great and most influential proportion of the North American population was of Anglo-Saxon origin, and that the larger proportion of these came from the class that in general supported English Dissent; and that the ways of thought and general characteristics developed in this class by its struggle for power, by its religious tradition, and by its racial traits made for industrial and capitalistic progress. . . . ." [7]

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[7] *The Religious Background of American Culture,* Little, Brown & Co., Boston, 1930, p. 224.

In the course of time the same religion which had been allied with the cause of the less-favored groups in seventeenth-century England against the evils of the old regime tended to blind itself to the evils which arose concomitantly with the rise of the middle class. In one of the reports of the Conference on Christian Politics, Economics and Citizenship we find this statement:

> The Christian Church itself, generally speaking, seemed unable to realize the grave moral and spiritual issues at stake and unaware of the inhumanity of the new economic developments. It is strange that it should have been so blind to the steady subordination of men to machinery, and the subordination of things spiritual and aesthetic as well as ethical to the cause of material gain. So general was its blindness that even the exceptions to this are frequently forgotten or ignored.[8]

In illustration of this situation the authors of the report cite the advice given by Wilberforce to the members of the lower orders of society, namely, "that their more lowly path had been allotted to them by the hand of God," that it was their part "faithfully to discharge its duties and contentedly bear its inconveniences." Wilberforce had more compassion for Negroes than for his fellow-countrymen in their worse than slavery. Thus religion, having allied itself with the ideals of the middle class in its struggle for power, has found a reasonable amount of happiness and contentment in

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[8] *Historical Illustrations of the Social Effects of Christianity,* London, 1924, XII, 127-128.

a society dominated by that class. It has lost the contact with a transcendent value which might offer guidance in a time when the structure of the society built by the middle class begins to crumble.

American Protestantism has become for the most part a middle-class luxury, although its conscience, not completely quieted, has given rise to a rather radical social gospel. More and more the social evils of an industrial society have become matters of concern for religion. This religious interest has been the source of some of our outstanding ethical leaders, even though many of these have later repudiated religion. Others see in the revolutionary teachings of Jesus a point of contact between religion and social radicalism, and thus find it possible to maintain their connection with the Church which bears his name, a Church which in actual practice is nevertheless controlled largely by the ruling economic class. Social radicalism, however, is hardly to be identified with the proper social action or teaching of Christianity. For Christianity to equate its ethical purpose with the radical cause would be as great a mistake as frankly to support the old order. Religion must not only be bold in its denunciation of the evils of present society, but also maintain an ethic independent of the details of any particular social program. It must be independent both of the order that is passing and of the order which is to occur in the future. That it will in some sense be related to and modified by the society in which it lives is obvious—but it should also be sufficiently autonomous that it can in turn modify that society. Since genuine

Christianity is concerned with the welfare of the disinherited it follows that the proper ethical emphasis would very likely contribute to the weakening of the power of the old regime, and thus would be an aid to the emergence of a new order. But religion should have a perspective from which to avoid the error of assuming that one class has a monopoly on evil and the other a monopoly on good.

The regaining of a sense of the deep significance of its own history is an important part of Christianity's preparation for its social mission. Religion must have a profound self-respect, an awareness of an institutional and ideological continuity. This would not only be valuable for the life of the Church itself, but would furnish a sense of tradition, a body of convictions, a dignity and discipline, which American culture in general needs. Religion cannot be of greatest service if it becomes absorbed in any secular ideal, whether it be conservative, liberal, or radical. It should not graft itself to one of the current social philosophies; rather, it can have its distinctive declarations to make. In becoming more sensitive to its own insights it will become more definite in its pronouncements on the economic and political order. It better fulfills its ethical purpose in the world by bringing sociological, economic, and political knowledge to a deep consideration of its own beliefs, than by carrying a so-called Christian spirit into the study of sociology, economics, and politics. The latter strategy almost inevitably results in religion being absorbed by secularism. But, of course, the validity of the former technique depends upon an

adequate theology, and upon seeing the relation between theology and the social problem.

There are many historical and philosophical factors which have contributed to making American Protestantism unduly dependent upon the temporal culture of modernity, thus rendering it difficult for religion to remain a useful critic of the underlying presuppositions and the workings of the social order. A few of these have been mentioned. The nominalistic philosophy has not only made practically impossible a united Christian program, but has also led to attacking the social problem on an individualistic basis. The Protestantism which has been particularly influential in America is one which was dynamically related to the struggle of the middle class in its rise to economic and political power, and so there was a tendency for religion to identify its principles with the interests of a capitalist society ruled by the middle class. Finally, the social gospel either saw no other goal than that of extending the democratic ideals in the name of Christianity, or of becoming more radical by allying religion with socialism or communism.

On the other hand, if religion tries to free itself from dependence on secular ideals and thus to make a distinctive contribution to solving the problems of society, it is bound to run into danger. If it takes, for example, the teachings of Jesus as authoritative, the question arises as to whether Jesus really had anything important to say about the problems of modern industrial society. It would seem that Karl Marx has more help to give us on this matter. If the Church is sup-

posed to contain the answers to our problems, we must not forget that those who speak in the name of the Church are fallible human beings and that they have no more finality than the best guesses of social scientists. What, then, is the relation of theology to the social problem? If the outline of theological method proposed in the previous chapters of this book is at all valid, it should throw some light on this issue. That method contains three factors. In the first place, there is the experimental or pragmatic approach to gaining knowledge. In the second place, there is the reasoned faith in a transcendent Being who controls nature and who alone possesses supreme value. In the third place, the content of faith is revealed in the Christian tradition. All of these are involved in any Christian attack upon a social problem, but let us see how each of these principles may be employed.

III

The pragmatic principle ought to constitute a part of Christian social thinking, and so far as it is actually present it ought to be recognized as such. A part of this principle is that whatever problem we face must be seen in its context. The religious application is that we are motivated to do the best possible thing in the particular situation. Brunner is fairly close to this notion when he says,

> It is impossible to define the task of the Christian within the economic sphere if we do not know this economic sphere in its specific historical form. The task of the Christian varies with the kind of economic system

within which he himself has to act on economic lines. Failure to perceive this fact is one of the main causes for the almost incredible remoteness of traditional Protestant ethics from actual life; it also explains why the Church, as a whole, in its attitude toward the social question is so completely out of touch with reality.[9]

Values at the pragmatic level are always relative, and one of the chief errors into which Christians fall is that of confusing what is relative with the absolute.

The economic system in which we live is a temporal phenomenon. It came into existence under particular historical circumstances, and there is no more reason to believe that it is the final order than that some past system can be brought back to life. But for us capitalism is the mode of economic organization within which we must act. The Christian frequently alternates between justifying the best features of the system as expressing the ideal of service or the law of love, and becoming so romantically critical of the basic profit motive that he abandons the whole of economic life to the devil and tries to transcend it imaginatively and spiritually. But there should be some religious implications of the fact of choice between better and worse. From the pragmatic point of view injustice is not so much the known opposite of a rationally conceived ideal of justice as it is an awareness of a difficulty, a social dislocation, one sign of which may be vocal complaint on the part of a certain section of the population. This is why we become more acutely aware of injustice in a day of widespread unemployment.

[9] *The Divine Imperative,* Macmillan Co., New York, 1937, p. 416.

The purpose of any economic system, we may assume, is that of so organizing the natural and human resources that a maximum amount of goods and services can be provided with maximum efficiency. And so, as Barbara Wootton says, "before we make any criticism of this form of economic organization [the capitalistic price economy] we must give due weight to the commonplace that in the last century and a half this system has provided the mass of the people with an abundance and a variety of forms of consumption never before equalled in the history of mankind. . . . . Judged by sheer volume of output, by its record of actual physical achievement, the price economy . . . . stands unchallenged." [10] It is this fact to which the conservative will point in justification of the system. But the conservative will also do his best to minimize the failure of the system adequately to use its human resources and to feed a large number of the people whom it is supposed to serve. The latter becomes a matter of chief concern for religion. Let us not suppose that Christianity has any superior theory as to the reason for the breakdown of capitalism at this point, or that it knows a remedy for unemployment. These details are to a large extent the problems of social engineering. What religion can do is to insist that here is a problem which must not be put aside, a problem of prime importance. If this is kept constantly and persistently to the fore there is some chance of alleviation if not of complete solution. It is merely the as-

[10] *Plan or No Plan*, Farrar & Rinehart, New York, 1934, p. 102.

sertion that human interests are more important than property or the operation of an economic mechanism. But the pragmatic principle demands also that we anticipate so far as possible the consequences of whatever means may be proposed to solve this problem. At this level there are no final values which exist independent of their relation to other things. It is a case of doing the best thing possible in any given situation, but religion insists that it shall be the *very* best possible. Thus it cannot be content with an easy answer to the fact of human starvation when it sees the actual existence of unused goods and the potential production of many more goods all about us. Whether or not it is necessary violently to overthrow the present order depends not only upon the question as to the success of this method in solving the present difficulty, but also on the further consequences to which it would lead.

The reason for stressing the nature of the pragmatic principle is that this is so often used unwittingly and therefore becomes confused with some absolute "Christian principle." The reference to the use of violence suggests a particularly good example of this. The pragmatic argument against the use of violence is always one which points to the undesirable results which would follow. It is not a case of seeing an inherently superior ethical quality in the employment of relatively peaceful methods. If it is desirable that the working classes should have better conditions for their labor, more effective bargaining power, and a higher percentage of the earnings of the industries of which they are a part, then the best means to achieve these things is

the means which actually works. To be sure, the ends mentioned are not absolute, and therefore the means employed must be judged not only by its success in achieving the specific ends, but also by the further consequences to which it leads. There is no way of being sure in advance what means is good apart from the effectiveness in getting the desired results. Christians frequently fail to realize how many of the things of which they approve have come about only as the result of coercion. All one needs to do to become disillusioned on this point is to compare the number of social improvements which have come through moral suasion exerted on individuals possessing economic power and those which have been gained through the coercive techniques of labor unions.

We must see that a sentimental sympathy with labor is not enough. We should be aware of the fact that since even the law reflects property interests, effective strikes by labor may have to be illegal. Law and order are themselves only relative goods, and whether illegal methods used by labor are justified can be decided only in terms of their success in gaining desirable results. Christianity, in failing to see the implications of this principle, is many times a party standing in the way of improvements for labor. Industrialists, realizing the unrealistic attitude toward coercion which is found in the Church, need only maneuver strikers into a position where an outbreak of violence ocurs in order to weaken the sympathy of Christians for the cause of labor. This happens in spite of the fact that the toll of

dead and injured is usually greater among the workers than among the defenders of property.

A similar distinction needs to be made in connection with arguments against war. The real reason for advocating nonviolent means of settling international disputes is that the alternative method both fails to achieve a settlement and leads to results which are even worse. Peace, in the sense of lack of war between nations, is not an absolute value but instrumental to what is considered the well-being of humanity as a whole. It is one type of political technique. The cynical selfishness of nations and the economic causes of war must be taken into account if a workable means of preventing destructive conflict is to be devised. Too often has Christianity's mood been better satisfied by stamping the League of Nations or the Kellogg Pact with its approval than by making a bold and searching condemnation of the social evils which result in war. Such expressions of what is mistakenly thought to be good will are sometimes actually pointed to as evidences of the spirit of Christ ruling international relations.

Christians have been known to inject into the pragmatic argument against war the notion that pacifism is an example of the absolute ideal of non-resistance. But every state has come into being through the use of force and maintains its existence through force. Martyrdom is a very rare phenomenon among individuals and quite unheard of among nations. More sensible is the traditional Christian doctrine that the state is both a result and corrective of the evil consequences of the Fall. Since men in their fallen condition are no

longer capable of living according to the ideal principle of love, they are subjected to the coercive power of the state. But the state also is good since it curbs the inordinate selfishness of evil men and maintains a degree of order and justice impossible in an uncontrolled society. The values which the state embodies are contingent upon the continuing existence of the state. If it tries to avoid war it does so not as the bearer of the cross of Christ but as a political entity using the best available means to a desired end. This argument does not mean that Christianity has no stake in the cause of peace. Anything which pertains to justice and humane ideals is of vital religious significance. It is even possible that an individual Christian might transcend his membership in the state sufficiently to be politically disloyal and practice the truly Christian ideal of nonresistance. All that is being maintained here is that in so far as peace is an instrumental value it has a better chance of being achieved if it is not confused with the law of love.

One more example of the pragmatic principle may be offered in the area of marriage and the family. It is perfectly evident that distorted personalities are frequently developed among children who come from broken homes, and that this is an evil which it would be desirable to avoid if at all possible. We must realize too that neurotic children are also produced by homes which maintain an outward appearance of stability but in which there exists a tension and incompatibility between the mother and father. Here is a problem which needs to be solved according to the best principles

available. Freedom is required to investigate the sexual, social, and economic factors leading to incompatibility and divorce in order that we may have relevant knowledge upon which to build a solution. There have been times when Christianity has materially interfered with this procedure. There is some justification in the notion that marriage involves the sacrifice of individual autonomy and the merging of two persons into a unity which should not be broken. There is the further truth that without a purpose transcending the casual physical enjoyment on the part of a man and a woman, there is no real solution to the marriage problem. On the other hand, to erect these religious ideas into a binding legal principle is to prevent the possibility of investigating the conditions of actual family life and of achieving the results which are universally considered desirable. Particularly harmful has been the literal and legal acceptance of the New Testament statement that adultery is the one justifiable ground of divorce. The problem is thus made more difficult because an a priori solution is assumed in advance of the accumulation of facts. Upon investigation it turns out frequently that adultery is one of the least justifiable grounds of divorce, while other factors which are discovered in a particular case are absolutely baffling even to the most optimistic observer. From the pragmatic point of view, the one solution in some situations may be divorce, but this can be decided only in terms of specific cases.

This discussion, particularly that which was concerned with economics and politics, brings to light a

curious contrast between the eighteenth century and the twentieth century on the relation between secular and religious views of the nature of man. In the eighteenth century the Christian doctrine of original sin and inherited guilt was still able to exert a considerable influence. It impressed the secular mind as a spreading and disheartening cloud which hid from men the bright vision of what society might become if the natural human faculties were utilized to the fullest. Hence the importance of Locke's attack on the notion of innate ideas and of Rousseau's theory that the natural man has a goodness which can flower under proper environmental conditions. Christianity was pessimistic, secularism was optimistic concerning the inherent goodness and natural possibilities of man. Liberal Christianity of the twentieth century, on the other hand, is frightfully optimistic about the ability of individual men and of social groups to manifest the spirit of Jesus. At the same time, modern secularism takes a comparatively cynical view of human nature and appears to recognize the fact of an ineradicable core of selfishness. This swing of the pendulum seems to be but one more evidence of the depth of the traditional Christian insight that "it is only that paradox of divine idealism regarding man's potentiality, and rigid realism concerning his actuality, that can ever meet the human fact." [11] Eighteenth-century philosophy was a protest against traditional Christianity's neglect of the first part of the paradox, while liberal Christianity seems to have be-

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[11] See p. 18 note.

come unmindful of the second half. To the tough-minded person in the modern world Christianity appears as an irrelevant and sentimental idealism. But if religion should recover a sense of its own historic doctrine of man it would have the foundation upon which to make a profoundly critical estimate of the human situation.

In developing the implications of the pragmatic principle we may have given the impression that the ideal of love has no bearing upon practical situations. That impression needs to be corrected. Christianity always has the task of persuading men to spiritualize their lives, and the conscientious attempt to identify one's will with the spirit of Christ does serve to mitigate the brutalities of human rivalry. The point of the whole discussion is that practical issues of the moment demand thinking in terms of relative, rather than in terms of absolute, values. This being the case, we must see that a good means is that which produces a good result even though many times it appears to be contrary to the Christian ideal of love. This is what is meant by the pragmatic principle. Let us repeat that this principle ought to form one part of the total method employed by social Christianity, and in so far as it is a part of that method it must be recognized for what it is in order that harmful confusion may be avoided.

IV

Religion demands that in every concrete situation we must use the best possible means to the best possible

ends. It also cautions us that the best possible is not the same as the absolute best. Justice is not love, socialism is not the Kingdom of God, devotion to our highest attainable ideals is not the same as obeying the will of God. In our discussion concerning the knowledge of nature we pointed to certain considerations which may lead to faith in a Divine Being which transcends every and all empirical fragments of knowledge and which forms the basis of our predictions and theories. In a similar fashion, we passed beyond the experimental theory of value to the faith in a Being whose value transcends all instrumental and partial values. This faith is relevant to the social problem and becomes the second principle in theological procedure—the principle of transcendence.

There is a kind of naïve contentment which makes it possible for us to feel a satisfaction in particular achievements even when we know that they fall short of the ideal. Such contentment is fostered by the belief in the inevitable improvement of society so that we rest our faith in a future which will overcome the shortcomings of the best solutions we have made. There is also the practical attitude which has its values in tempering an undue concern over our failures to bring the pure ideal into existence. At the same time there is always the danger of making a facile identification of the ideal and the actual, and it is this danger which the principle of transcendence helps us avoid. The religious man is called upon to do the best he can, but this best is always so far short of the divine will that he still stands convicted of sin. That man is both mor-

ally responsible and also predestined to evil is a paradox in Christian doctrine which has occasioned a great deal of difficulty. A purely rational reading of Augustine on this point discloses nothing but contradiction, and it has been argued that if we take the point of view that man cannot help being a sinner it makes no difference what he does. Some light is thrown upon this difficulty if we see it as a combination of the pragmatic and the transcendent principles. The apparent inconsistency is removed if we keep in mind the two references which are implied. Actual choices in the day-by-day task of living have to do with relative goods within a temporal social context. There are differences of better and worse in these choices, and it is highly important that the better should be chosen. But man's action also refers to a transcendent good in comparison with which it is always less than the best; no matter how conscientious he is, man is still a sinner in the sight of God. This combination throws light also upon the traditional notion that man is both a child of nature and created in the image of God. Naturalistic ethics, although by no means devoid of religious values, must be supplemented by the idea that the highest achievements of natural man always stand under divine judgment. Spiritual man is never content to give his absolute loyalty to anything less than God himself, a being who is not identical with any human institution or temporal order of society. This attitude, as already suggested in the second chapter, has practical implications for social ethics. Among other

things, it provides a meaningful distinction between religious and political loyalties.

Democratic ideals arose in reaction against political absolutism, and the religious contribution to this movement was the conviction that human personality has a sacred quality. Even the middle-class economic interests made use of the ideal of the prime importance of individual rights. But this ideal has greater force if linked with its foundation, namely, that human beings possess worth because they are God's creatures. Democracy loses its appeal when the issue between the individual and the state becomes merely an issue as to whether or not persons shall be free to carry on economic pursuits without governmental interference. It is a source of amazement to many of us that there can be genuine enthusiasm among the youth of Fascist nations, and we have been desperately trying to find a democratic motto having emotive power. The religious factor involved is that man's spiritual nature is always nourished by his finding of something larger than his private interests to which he can devote himself and which gives meaning to his life. We constantly point to the tragedy of the subjection of the individual to the will of the state. The real tragedy is that the individual is giving his absolute commitment to a temporal power rather than to God who is above all national divisions. Citizens of democracies are correct in believing that political loyalty is relative but they are wrong in supposing that there is no other reason for this than their desire to enjoy petty freedom. Man's rights are sacred because men are God's crea-

tures, and men should not give absolute loyalty to the political state because the only object worthy of complete devotion is God. Even the cynic cannot help being impressed by the courage which religious motivation has generated in resisting modern versions of absolutism.

The use of the word "transcendence" does not necessarily imply a sharp dualism between the natural and the supernatural. By the transcendent may be meant that which goes beyond the collection of verified ideas which we think of as constituting knowledge, or that which is above all known or instrumental values. That there are genuine human communities which are not bound to physical or temporal conditions will readily be granted. A state must always be attached to some geographical area, and it is a phenomenon which comes into being in time and passes out of being. But the Jews have continued to be a people without benefit of homeland and thus furnish an example of a natural reality which at least transcends spatial factors. There is also the community of scholarship, of ethical ideals, or of the spirit, which suggests the meaning of transcendence in continuity with the natural. Religion fulfills its function only when it is able to give men a sense of the ultimate significance of life, of being related to a realm of meaning and value which goes beyond the earth-bound and time-bound conditions of any state. Every political affiliation will certainly come to an end, while a truly religious affiliation has the possibility of permanence.

Along with the rise of democracy there emerged the

capitalistic economic system which became emancipated from both political and religious control. Indeed, it became so important that Marx saw politics as a function of economics and the state as a tool through which the dominant economic class keeps itself in power. Economic activity, which on any common-sense basis would seem to possess instrumental value merely, was elevated to a place of supreme importance and developed into an autonomous system, which, according to its priests, is subject only to its own laws. Capitalism in a very real sense became the substitute for religion, and that is what gives point to Thurman Arnold's clever and apt likening of the literature of classical economics to religious literature. He says that the folklore of capitalism pictures the "American Businessman" as "independent of his fellows. No individual could rule him. Hence the 'rule of law above men' was symbolized by the Constitution. This meant that the American Businessman was an individual who was free from the control of any other individual and owed allegiance only to the Constitution. However, he was the only individual entitled to this kind of freedom. His employees were subject to the arbitrary control of his divinity. Their only freedom consisted in the supposed opportunity of laborers to become American businessmen themselves." [12] Arnold contends that because the folklore of capitalism is not recognized as folklore, but is looked upon as the statement of eternal

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[12] *The Folklore of Capitalism*, Yale Univ. Press, New Haven, 1937, p. 35.

truths, we have all the more reason to view this finite economic culture as a religious impostor.

The substitution of an autonomous economic system for a religion having transcendent reference is reflected also in Clarence Day's amusing and illuminating portrait of his father. After describing his father's disgust with the sentimental mouthings of a minister who pictured the businessman at the close of the day turning from the sordid world of finance to a contemplation of "higher things," Clarence Day writes:

> Aside from the wild untruth of such pictures of business, from Father's point of view the whole attitude involved was pernicious. Anyone dreamy enough to think of money as "dross" was bound to get himself into hot water; that went without saying; it was a sign both of ignorance of, and of disrespect for, finance. Father had more respect for finance than he had for the church. When he left the financial district behind him to visit the church, he felt as I suppose Moses must have felt coming down from the mountain. Moses found people blind to his mountain and worshiping a calf idiotically, and Father found Dr. Garden capering around something he called Higher Things.[13]

In his lucid description of the decay of ideals which in the past gave meaning to life, Mr. Krutch sees the modern man either cured of his transcendental longings or finding no resources with which to satisfy them. The spirit of our age leads Krutch to suggest that

> among those of keener intellect there are scientists to whom the test tube and its contents are all-sufficient, and

[13] *God and My Father,* Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1935, p. 31.

among those of coarser grain, captains of finance and builders of mills, there are those to whom the acquirement of wealth and power seems to constitute a life in which no lack can be perceived. Doubtless they are not new types; doubtless they have always existed; but may they not be the strain from which Nature will select the coming race? Is not their creed the creed of Nature, and are they not bound to triumph over those whose illusions are no longer potent because they are no longer really believed? [14]

Illustrations could be multiplied which point to the fact that capitalism is more than one method among others of producing and distributing economic goods. It is also a dominating spirit, a means which has become an end, a secular pursuit turned into a religion, a finite and relative phenomenon taking the place of the eternal and the absolute. Thus the concern of Christianity with economics is more than that of finding the best ways of correcting injustices; it finds in capitalism a spiritual force which bends to its will all intellectual, aesthetic, moral, and religious values. Genuine religion cannot live unless the dominance of this spirit is broken, and thus we come upon another factor which leads religion in the path of social radicalism. But the reality which gives meaning to the life of a Christian transcends both a passing capitalist culture and any other order which may emerge. The transcendent principle is a necessary part of a theology which is able to free American Protestantism from too great a dependence upon middle-class interests, and the

[14] *The Modern Temper*, Harcourt, Brace & Co., New York, 1929, p. 21.

social gospel from being absorbed by a radical social movement.

Christianity has proved its ability to survive political and social upheavals. If it is to continue to do so it must recover a sense of its own distinctive and historic faith which, as Jacques Maritain has said, refuses to be absorbed in any culture and yet may be the most potent cultural stimulus. The Church's theory concerning its own nature must make meaningful the fact of its continuity. Reinhold Niebuhr has pointed out that

> the prophets saved Hebraic religion from extinction when the Babylonian exile ended the Hebraic culture-religion with its center in the worship of the temple. They not only saved the life of religion, but raised it to a new purity by their interpretation of the meaning of catastrophe, the redemptive power of vicarious suffering, and the possibility of a redemption which would include more than the fortunes of Israel. In somewhat the same fashion Augustine's faith dissociated Christianity from a dying Roman world.[15]

The question arises as to whether contemporary Christianity has the resources to provide a line of prophets or an Augustine capable of dissociating religion from a civilization which may disintegrate. It is obvious that in order to do so, social Christianity must include the principle of transcendence.

V

The third principle of theological method is the

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[15] *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

faith that the character of God is to be found in the Christian revelation. In relation to the social problem it is the Kingdom of God ideal which has particular importance. There are three ways of viewing the Kingdom, no one of which is adequate in itself, but when taken together constitute the Christian conception.

In the first place, the Kingdom has relevance to the historic process. The law of love is the standard by which the relative goodness of any social situation is judged, and it is the content of that hope which we have in a future when evil shall be overcome. The religious significance of present activity is seen partly in relation to that which is to be. Men as well as God have a responsibility in bringing the Kingdom to pass in the social life of the world. The Kingdom is not only related to history, it also has a history and development of its own. It grows like the "grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof." (Matt. 13:31-32.) Men are called upon to work at the task of extending the rule of God's will in the hearts of men and in society both qualitatively and quantitatively. Where the ideals of the Kingdom are already partially manifest there is the need of deepening and intensifying their influence. There is also the need of bringing all geographical and social areas under the sway of divine rule. Life is made meaningful to the degree in which society approximates the

ideal, and the significance of history lies in the movement toward the goal of the complete realization of the Kingdom of God. This is part of the faith and hope which provide the religious motivation to build a better world. The word "kingdom" itself has political implications. Theological concepts are used as the standards by which actual historical situations are judged and as the ideals which it is the social and religious task of men to make as practically effective as possible.

On the other hand, it is impossible to imagine any earthly society which can embody completely the ideals of the Kingdom. Philosophers have long observed that to have a world of creatures implies the existence of evil. The individual finds disharmony among the interests and desires of his own soul, and his will encounters the wills of other persons in such a way that conflict is inevitable. To have a world at all is to have what Leibniz called metaphysical evil. Where there is finitude there is conflict, and where there is conflict the law of love is not supreme. Such harmony as we are able to achieve is itself dependent upon coercive power. The Christian notion that evil entered the world through pride is another way of saying the same thing. Man turns from his true being in God and sets his own finite self in rivalry to the divine. Within the world as we know it there may be relative improvements, but the basic conditions are such as to prevent the full realization of the ideals of the Kingdom.

This brings us to the second way of viewing the

Kingdom of God, the way of eschatology. History as we know it and anticipate it moves in the realm of relativities within which the basic factors of selfishness and finitude can never be wholly conquered. Yet the meaning of history is that it should culminate in the absolute sway of God's will. Since this goal cannot be achieved within the natural sequence of events it follows that the Kingdom will be realized at a point beyond history when the very conditions of the world have been radically altered. The meaning of history thus lies outside history. This is not to say that we have any way of predicting that the end of the world will occur, or of anticipating accurately the date of such an event. We all know the absurd and paralyzing results of attempts to make realistic calculations regarding this matter. There is always the temptation to transform mythological pictures of the deep meaning of life into philosophical concepts or scientific descriptions of fact. What the eschatological part of faith means is that the absolute ideal of love cannot be realized within the conditions of history, that the coming of the Kingdom is not completely within the control of men but is ultimately in the hands of God, and that the meaning of history is found in that which transcends history. This point of view has the merit of saving us from the fallacy of supposing that any historic order is the embodiment of the Kingdom of God and from hopeless despair when we discover that relative improvements always fall short of the ideal and actually bring with them new evils.

The two views of the Kingdom of God which have

been described point to a future when the temporal process will be consummated and the meaning of existence revealed. But the Christian faith also asserts that this meaning has already been revealed, that the Kingdom of God is a present reality as well as a future possibility. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." (I Corinthians 2:9-10.) Jewish eschatology had anticipated the Messianic Age as the end of the kingdoms of this world, as the institution of a reign of perfect righteousness, and as the revelation of the meaning and goal of history. Christianity inherited the belief in the reality of time and took over a great deal of the Hebraic eschatological scheme. The important change in this outlook lay in the belief that Christ was the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Thus the Messianic Age and the Kingdom of God came with Christ; yet the kingdoms of this world were not overthrown, nor was there the visible and complete rule of God. What Christ did was to reveal the meaning of history, and although there was the continuation of history under essentially the same conditions as before, men were no longer in doubt as to the nature of the ultimate goal. The Greeks made an important contribution to this interpretation with their conception of the ability of man to transcend the temporal and inhabit the spiritual realm of the eternal. Such a notion is found at the close of Book IX of Plato's *Republic:* "In heaven . . . .

there is laid up a pattern of it [the ideal city], ... which he who desires may behold, and beholding, may set his own house in order. But whether such an one exists, or ever will exist in fact, is no matter; for he will live after the manner of that city, having nothing to do with any other." The early Christian believed that the Kingdom of God had arrived, and yet he found himself living under conditions which were very much the same as they were before the coming of Christ. It seemed, therefore, that he "lived 'in the flesh,' that is to say, within the conditions of space, time and matter by which history is bounded. Yet he had experienced a 'new creation,' he had 'tasted the powers of the Age to Come,' he had been 'born again' out of the sphere of the flesh into that of Spirit, had died to the world and risen again with Christ, and now lived with him in 'heavenly places.' " [16]

Those theologians who are fond of mystery and paradox will undoubtedly delight in the difficulties of bringing these three apparently contradictory notions of the Kingdom into conceptual harmony. The secular mind may dismiss them all, especially the second and third, as primitive fantasy. Mindful of the fact that these ideas have a depth which may elude any attempt to put them in brief conceptual form, let us try to see them as integral parts of a total picture. Men are always trying to find some way of endowing their activities with significance and they inevitably relate the meaning of what they do to the hope in a

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[16] C. H. Dodd, *The Kingdom of God and History*, Willett, Clark & Co., Chicago, 1938, p. 28.

better future. But ordinary experience shows us that every gain is relative and that new evils are forever appearing within the time series. History is a record of the rise and fall of political powers, of the waxing and waning of social orders. We cannot find the ultimate meaning of life in any one of these temporal phenomena. The Romans were simply mistaken in thinking that the fall of Rome was the end of the world. Thus the ideal must be something which transcends history. The Christian believes further that the ideal and the historical met in Christ and that therefore the goal of history is both something to come and something which has already taken place. The total concept of the Kingdom of God brings together the pragmatic and transcendent principles, and adds to these the Christian revelation.

Any one of these views taken in isolation from the others proves unsatisfactory. The first one, for example, has suited the modern world because it could be adjusted to the more important presuppositions of that world. It concentrated our attention upon making the ideals of the Kingdom operative in space and time and so catered to the prejudice of modernity against otherworldliness. It emphasized the progressive realization of the Kingdom in such a way as to utilize the idea of progress and it extended the evolutionary theory to the spiritual and ethical spheres.

This outlook can hardly avoid the assumption that the ideal is in some way immanent in the actual. If nature and society are moving toward perfection, the possibilities of the ideal goal are already present in the

natural order. The historic process is the unfolding of the inherent meaning of the whole, and the movement in time witnesses the realization of more and more of the potentialities. The logic of this position is that whatever happens in one generation is an improvement upon what has occurred previously, and is a necessary step in the progress toward perfection. Evil is not a part of the structure of the temporal order but that which is left over from an earlier evolutionary stage and which will eventually be overcome. Men and society are capable of being made perfect, and this will happen ultimately within the conditions of history. But we have already seen that progress moves always in the realm of relativities. We can make choices among relative goods but the conditions under which we live are such that evil cannot be completely eradicated. If we take our standards of goodness from the Christian ideal there is no empirical or historical justification for believing that there has been ethical progress. If we continue to insist upon the fact of progress as inherent in the nature of things, we are forced to the absurd conclusion that whatever happens today is right for our generation as constituting a necessary step in the development toward temporal perfection.

The attachment of the Kingdom of God idea to such notions as these is partially responsible for the impotence of the Christian Church in dealing with social problems. Religion becomes caught in the alternation between an optimism which lasts only so long as there is belief in progress, and a pessimism to which no an-

swer can be found when the faith in progress collapses. This difficulty can be avoided if the total picture of the Kingdom of God is kept in mind.

The early Church, on the other hand, was slow in developing a social philosophy because it took too literally and exclusively the eschatological idea of the Kingdom. It waited in confident expectation of the immediate end of the world and formulated its ethical outlook accordingly. When it was forced to alter its position because of the decline of the millenarian hope, it had recourse to the Stoic concept of natural law as forming the basis of its social thinking. Troeltsch summarizes the resultant social ideas of the early Church as follows:

> In the Bible, in the absolute Law of Nature, and in monasticism the old sociological ideals lie ready to exert a new spiritual influence upon the whole of life. In the Church, through the concentration of the divine power in priest and sacrament, these ideals have been ecclesiastically united, and the creation of the Church is the real great sociological achievement of this period, whose inner fundamental theory does not penetrate too deeply into the common life; so far its influence was mainly felt in family life. Through the ideas of theocracy and relative Natural Law social problems have also been mastered, in that, although the State and Society remain outwardly and legally just the same, in their hearts men are quite remote from and hostile to them, without however feeling urged to alter them, and using their institutions for future salvation and for the general security of life.[17]

[17] *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, tr. by Olive Wyon, Macmillan Co., New York, 1931, I, 163-164.

The ancient Church contrasted so sharply the Kingdom of God and the orders of society that it could find no meaningful relation between them. Its attitude toward the temporal social situation remained that of indifference or of hostility. The assumption that existing conditions were static and immutable further complicated the task of making the Christian ideal applicable to the social problem. Eventually, after the development of a strong ecclesiastical organization and the collapse of the Roman Empire, the Church made genuine strides in giving religious direction to the affairs of this world. But it took a long time for the early Church to see that the Christian task was not only to hope for "the attainment of the impossible," but also to "strive to accomplish the possible." [18]

Finally, too exclusive concentration upon the Kingdom as a present reality obscures the social mission of Christianity. It may lead to that type of mysticism which denies that the temporal process has moral and religious value, and finds the essence of religion in a spiritual transcendence and the contemplation of the eternal. This is but one part of the meaning of religion and is obviously harmful when it issues in the paralysis of social action. Or the notion of the present reality of the Kingdom taken in isolation from the other ideas may lead to the supposition that the *Civitas Dei* is actually embodied in the historic and visible Church, thus setting a false antithesis between two types of social organization rather than between the

[18] S. J. Case, *The Social Triumph of the Ancient Church*, Harper & Bros., New York, 1933, p. 236.

ideals of the Kingdom and the actualities of the world as it is. The ideal Church is in a peculiar sense the guardian of God's revelation in Christ, but this is not to be confused with particular human organizations.

The aim of this chapter has been to suggest a point of view from which an adequate Christian social philosophy can be constructed. If religion is to be an effective critic of culture and a forceful leader in social affairs, it must be a part of the world and yet transcend the world. The ethical demands of the Kingdom of God are always more severe than those of the culture within which the Church carries on its activities. A tension between the ideal and the actual is present whenever religion is properly performing its function. On the other hand, if the absoluteness of the ideal is not in some way made relevant to the natural world it remains merely an impossible hope having no influence in men's lives. Religious significance attaches to pragmatic choices among relative goods in the world of economics and politics as well as to the vision of an Age to Come.

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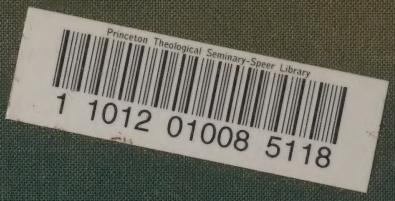
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